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# Aunt Mary's BRAN PIE





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"He did not hurt her at all."

See p. 106.

PIIP

"Which the pie was opened, the  
Was it that a dainty dish to set before you?"

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X Co

2027: E. 81.





# *AUNT MARY'S BRAN PIE*

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"ST. OLAVES," "WHEN I WAS A LITTLE GIRL," ETC.

"When the pie was opened, the birds began to sing,  
Wasn't that a dainty dish to set before a king?"

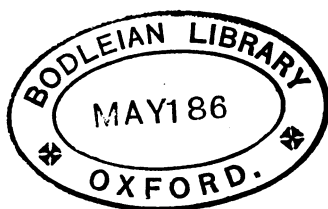
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TO  
*LILIAN, MABEL AND NOEL*





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## AUNT MARY'S BRAN PIE.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### WHY WE HAD THE PIE.

*P* BRAN pie. A very queer sort of pie, I think I hear you say. We do know something about mince pie, and apple pie, to be sure ; and the poet Southey once wrote an ode to gooseberry pie, which he thought was the best of all pies. But bran pie ! As if that could ever be good for anything. Such ridiculous nonsense. It's a joke. That's just what it is.

Not quite. I hope by the time you have come to the end of this little book, you will be willing to say that bran pie is as nice as any pie that was ever made ; and that if it *is* a joke, it's a remarkably good joke. I admit that it was all very well for Southey to write

his ode to gooseberry pie; most likely it was the best pie he knew about, poor man! But if he had had an Aunt Mary who could have made him a bran pie like ours, wouldn't he have written a fifty times better ode to that? An ode that would have been printed in every English poetry book, and learned by every English boy and girl, and sung at every fireside where little children keep their merry Christmas in this good land of ours? Yes, I know he would.

But before I say any more about the pie, I must tell you something about the little children for whom it was made.

When I was eleven years old—no, not quite so much, I think I could not have been more than ten—my two cousins, Daisy and Trot, came all the way from India to be taken care of by mamma. Their papa was my mamma's brother, so that they belonged to us in a sort of way. They could not have lived if they had stayed in India, and that was the reason they came to England to be at home with us.

Daisy was about six years old; Trot, a funny little round dumpling of a thing, with big brown eyes, was only three and a half. If you look at a map of the world, you will see what a long way these little

girls had to travel before they could reach the place where we lived. First of all they had to come to Bombay from Mussoorie, which is a place up among the Indian hills. I don't think you will find it on the map; I never could, though I have looked for it often enough. At Bombay they got into a ship called the *Arabia*, and sailed across the Indian Ocean, and up the Red Sea, which is terribly hot and stuffy, even in the coldest weather; and then into the blue Mediterranean, with its pretty islands, and fair Italian coast, and then on and on till they reached the English Channel, and came up the Thames, and stopped in the London Docks, thankful enough too, to be there; for living on board ship is not at all pleasant for little girls.

They had their papa to take care of them, and a nurse, or "ayah," as they call the nurses in India. How well I remember seeing that ayah come up the garden walk to our front door; such a funny-looking woman, with copper-coloured face, and black hair, and very large eyes, and a piece of white calico that looked as if it might be at least fifty yards long, wrapped all round her. I thought at first she had been acting charades and had forgotten to undress

herself. Crack, our watch-dog, was very much astonished too. I believe he thought poor Nynee had stolen the calico, for he barked furiously and tried to spring upon her ; but when we explained to him that it was only her funny way of dressing, he nodded his head and said, " All right ; go along, old lady," and Nynee and he were soon very good friends. Crack knew as well as could be when we told him people were to be trusted.

I must not even begin to tell you about the astonishment of my little cousins at our English ways, so different from anything they had ever seen in India ; that would make a book all to itself. But I will skip over September, October, and November, to December, when we began to talk about the bran pie. Uncle Frank, their papa, had gone away back to Mussoorie, so had the ayah ; and now Daisy and Trot were quite happy with us. Indeed they did not seem to know that our house was not their real home, and they had quite forgotten about Mussoorie, what sort of place it was. Only we often used to talk to them about their dear papa and mamma ; and every night and morning they used to kiss the pictures of them which hung over their little beds.

It was about a week before Christmas. Many little boys and girls whom we knew were going to have Christmas trees. We saw these trees in the shop windows too, so gay and beautiful, with silver balls hanging from the boughs, and festoons of coloured paper or beads, and toys hung all over them, and tiny waxen tapers, pink, and blue, and green, and crimson. When we passed these shops with my Aunt Mary, she would let us stop to look in and watch the toys dangling and flashing in the sunshine; but if ever we passed them with mamma, she used to walk on very quickly without ever stopping at all, and the tears would come into her eyes, and if we spoke to her she would scarcely answer us; because the Christmas trees reminded her of a little sister of mine, called Callie, who had died two years before. We had had a very beautiful tree then, and a children's party, and Callie had taken cold by creeping away behind the tree to an open window. We had forgotten about her, and she staid there a long time, and next day she was very ill, and the day after she died. We never had a Christmas tree again, because mamma could not bear to see it.

But one night, after Daisy and Trot had gone to bed—I did not go quite so soon, being more than ten years old—we were sitting by the dining-room fire, roasting chestnuts, and mamma said she thought the little ones ought to have a treat of some kind for Christmas, especially as they were so far away from their own dear papa and mamma ; only it must not be a tree, we were never to have that any more. Aunt Mary said she had been wondering about it too, and she thought a bran pie would be a very nice thing for us all ; and when she had told us how it was made, and all about it, papa and mamma both said it was a capital idea, we would begin to make one the very next day. But it was to be a great secret. Daisy and Trot were not to know anything about it. Although of course we might tell them that they were going to have bran pie for a Christmas treat, for they would never guess what it really meant, any more than I should if Aunt Mary had not explained it all to me.

Next morning, as nurse was brushing and curling our hair, I said to Daisy,—

“ Oh, Daisy, what do you think ? Aunt Mary is going to make us a bran pie.”

"A what?" said Daisy, turning her head as far round as she could, for nurse had her fast just then by a long piece of hair, "A *what?*"

'A bran pie, Daisy. That means, you know, a pie made of bran; and we are to have it for a Christmas treat."

"Please, Alice, what is *ban?*" said little Trot, who had crept out from behind the curtains, where she had been playing at being a mouse.

"Bran is what my rabbits eat," I answered, very gravely; "they have bran pie every day for dinner." I could not help teasing Trot a little sometimes, she used to look so gravely at me out of those big brown eyes of hers.

"And shall I be a rabbit if I eat ban pie?"

Nurse and I laughed very much, and so did Trot then, for she always did what she saw other people do. But Daisy, who was a very thoughtful little girl, looked as grave as could be. Bran pie! what could it mean? It was all very well to stuff rabbits and pincushions with; but to *eat* it, and for a treat, too!

"Will it have a crust, Alice?"

"Yes, and a very good one, too."



"Then I shall eat the crust, and leave all the rest. But, Alice, is Aunt Mary really going to give us *that* for a Christmas treat?"

"For a Tismas cheat," said our little echo, Trot.

But she looked as if it would not be so much of a "cheat" after all; while Daisy evidently thought it would be nothing else.

"Never mind," I said. "If Aunt Mary makes it, it is sure to be nice." And then, seeing that poor little Trot, who did not like the idea of turning into a rabbit, was getting ready to cry, I took her on my knee and made a crow's nest for her with my fingers; and we were soon all right again.



## CHAPTER II.

### HOW THE PIE WAS MADE.

FOR two whole days after we had settled to have this Christmas "cheat," Aunt Mary sat at her little table, writing. She had a fire made in her own room, and sat up there from morning to night. I didn't know what it meant at all.

They were not letters either—much longer than any letters I had ever seen; and instead of putting them into envelopes and fastening them up, she made rolls of them, and tied them with pretty coloured ribbon, and laid them away in her desk. What could they mean?

"Please, Aunt Mary, will you tell me what you are doing?" I said, one day.

"Never mind, Alice," said Aunt Mary, quietly. "It is of no consequence now."

When Aunt Mary spoke in that way, I never dared

ask any more questions. Indeed I used to feel ashamed of having said anything. But when I was a little girl I could not bear to see people writing. They always looked so grave over it. And then I had to keep so still. I could not help going up to mamma sometimes, when she was writing, and giving her a little poke, just to make her laugh ; for often I used to be afraid she was cross, she looked so very grave. But that was only when I was quite small. I soon found out it was a mistake.

I was so glad when at the end of two days Aunt Mary came out of her room, and said she had finished writing, because then we could really begin about the pie. First of all, though, she and I went into the town and bought two dolls, about a foot long, with wax faces and curling hair. Then a fire was made again in Aunt Mary's room, and we were very busy up there another day, making clothes and things that we did not want any one else to know about. I will not even tell you what they were, because it is such a secret. You will find out by-and-by. Mamma was very busy too, down in the dining-room, sewing ; but if ever Daisy or Trot happened to come into the room, she slipped her

work quietly into the basket, and began to do something else, because that was a secret too. Really, we all of us had so many secrets that we didn't know what to do. Everybody was making something that nobody else was to know anything about. If mamma came into Aunt Mary's room, we both of us got up and pushed her away, in fun of course; and if I ran into the dining-room, mamma would say, "Oh, Alice! scamper away; chop, chop," which is Chinese for "quick, quick;" and sometimes Aunt Mary wouldn't even let me come into her room, and sometimes I wouldn't let her come into mine; and everybody seemed to be afraid that somebody would find out something. But the funniest thing of all was to see Daisy and Trot. They could not think what it meant. They had never been pushed about in that way before, and told to keep out of the way, and they fancied at first we were vexed with them, poor little things! But they soon found out it was fun, too, and then they enjoyed it as much as any of us, though they did not know what it meant at all.

I was very much puzzled to find out what to make for papa. I had hemmed pocket-handkerchiefs for

him before, and made book-markers and muffetees, and now there seemed to be nothing else left. I was learning to draw, but I couldn't draw nearly well enough to make a picture. I was learning to knit, but I hadn't knitted anything worth giving away. I was learning to backstitch, but oh! what a muddle it was! not at all fit to put into a wrist-band yet. And I was learning to play upon the piano, which I enjoyed most of all my learnings, but I couldn't make papa a present of one of my tunes.

Couldn't I, though? Mamma and Aunt Mary said they thought the very prettiest surprise that I could make for papa on Christmas Eve would be to learn my new duet, "Home, sweet Home," quite perfectly, and play it to him when he came in from the office. There were some rather hard variations in it—at least hard for me; but Aunt Mary said she was quite sure, if I would only practise very carefully for the next four days, I should be able to do it well enough; only, of course, I must never practise when papa was at home; he must not know that I was learning it at all.

Delightful! I set to work at once. How good

Aunt Mary was, playing the bass for me, counting the time, playing little bits of my treble to show me how it ought to be done! Sometimes mamma and she played the whole duet through, whilst I stood by listening attentively—a very pleasant way, for a change, of taking a music lesson; and where the variations almost covered it up, she picked out the air for me, telling me how to mark it clearly and distinctly. And I did try to be very careful indeed, for I wanted so much to be able to do it all without a mistake on Christmas Eve.

And now there was that bran pie to be made. First came the crust, for of course it could not be a proper pie without a crust. Aunt Mary was to make it herself, so she put her cooking-apron on, and I one of my garden pinafores, and we set to work. We had a very large dish for the pie; indeed it was the brown earthenware bowl which cook used for making bread, rather small at the bottom, and gradually widening out towards the top, until it must have been nearly two feet across. The crust was made of what is called Scotch cake, flour mixed with sugar, butter, and a very little milk, into a stiff paste; but instead of this crust being all in a piece

—for we could never have rolled one out big enough to cover such a pie as ours—it was made in six separate compartments, each in the shape of a long triangle, and Aunt Mary marked our names upon them in pink and white comfits—Papa, Mamma, Aunt Mary, Alice, Daisy, and Trot. Besides the names, she put pretty designs in comfits all round; then the crust was baked and set in the larder to cool.

Next morning we began to make the inside of the pie. First we filled the dish two or three inches deep with bran, and then we arranged six white paper parcels, with our names written upon them, and one of those mysterious rolls of paper tied to each. I did not know what the rolls meant, even then, and Aunt Mary would not tell me. Then we put still more bran, heaping it well up in the middle, and then the six pieces of crust were put on, so that the name written upon each should come just over the same name written on one of the paper parcels. After that we put a border of tissue paper cut into fringe, all round, and we set the pie in a large plant basket, covering the basket with ivy leaves so that the brown earthenware dish should

not show, and we put holly leaves up and down where the pieces of crust joined, and a very tall sprig of holly, with flags of blue, crimson, white and gold amongst it, in the middle. Then the basket was lifted upon a round table and set in the bay window of the drawing-room, and round the table we put candle-oranges, to be lighted when the pie was cut.

I will tell you how to make these candle-oranges, for they are very pretty ornaments. You take a quill, about four inches long, and cut it down, nearly to the bottom, in very narrow strips, perhaps twelve strips. On each of these strips you stick a raisin, or a blanched almond, or a bit of candied fruit, or a holly berry; and then, when you thrust the quill down into the orange, these strips fall over like a little plume. Then you put your coloured taper in the middle and light it, or, if you like, you can have a flag or a sprig of holly instead. You can imagine how pretty fifteen or twenty of these candle-oranges would look arranged round the basket.

And now our bran pie was really finished, and wasn't it a dainty dish to set before a king? We didn't set it before the king yet, though, or before



anybody else, but we drew the curtains in front of it, and left it there in the drawing-room window until Christmas Eve. In the next chapter I shall tell you how we opened it.



## CHAPTER III.

## HOW THE PIE WAS OPENED.

I WAS very glad when Christmas came, not only on account of the opening of the pie, but because it was so hard to keep such a lot of secrets. I wanted every one to know about everything, but it was hardest of all to keep my secret about the duet. I used to ask papa to guess what I had been doing, and he would guess the most ridiculous things, of course never hitting upon the right one. And then he would say,—

“Oh, dear! oh, dear! what is it that my little Alice is doing for me? Have you put it in the pie, Alice?”

Oh! how I laughed.

“No, papa; it isn’t in the pie. And you won’t see it on the table either, and you will want a very big pair of spectacles to find it out.”

And then I used to look very hard indeed at the piano, and Aunt Mary would tell me to run away out of the room, for fear papa should really find out. But he never did.

And what fun we used to have with Daisy and Trot about this wonderful pie. One day, when we were feeding the rabbits in the back yard, I said to Trot,—

“Trot, we shall have bran pie ourselves every night next week.”

“But we’re not rabbits,” said Trot.

“No, but we shall have slices of bran pie just the same as if we were.”

Then the corners of Trot’s mouth began to tremble. Poor little pet, she always cried if any one teased her; and Daisy, who was a very loving sister, kissed her and said,—

“Never mind, Trot. Perhaps it’s a very little of bran, and a great deal of something else, but I’m quite sure if Auntie Mary makes it, it can’t be bad for us.”

And Trot would give a great sigh of relief. That was quite enough. Aunt Mary was to make it, so it *must* be good.

And then, if Daisy wanted a story telling, mamma would say, "Wait until the bran pie is opened." And if Trot wondered when her little doll with the real hair was coming, we used to say, "Wait until the bran pie is opened;" so that at last it became quite a proverb in the house, and Trot herself caught up the words, though she didn't in the least know what they meant. For one day when nurse, who had a bad toothache, said,—

"Oh, dear me! I wish my mother would come to see me, and comfort me up a bit;"—

Trot came up to her, and looked into her face, and said, as if she was quite sure that would set all straight,—

"Wait until the ban pie is opened."

Nurse laughed so much then, that her toothache quite went away, so Trot was not far wrong after all.

At last Christmas Eve did come. There was such a bright fire in the drawing-room, and the lamps were lighted, and the curtains were still drawn close over the pie, and nurse dressed us in our best, Daisy and Trot in their crimson merino frocks with muslin pinafores, and I in my blue cloth with white fur round the neck—I was too old for a pinafore then—

and Aunt Mary and mamma were sitting with their work by the fire, and the piano was open, with my duet on the desk, ready for us to begin as soon as we heard papa's footsteps on the gravel walk outside. As the time drew near for him to come, I began to tremble, and I felt as if I must run away out of the room; but Aunt Mary began to talk to me about something that happened when she was a little girl, and she told me about a tune she had learned then, and we went to the piano, and began to play mine, just to get through it once before papa came; and I was so interested in it, and tried so very hard to do it quite right, that I forgot about everything else, and did not even know that papa *had* come in, until the duet was finished, and he stood there behind me, looking so surprised and very, *very* pleased.

He held out his arms to me, and I jumped up into them, and kissed him ever so many times.

"Why, Alice," he said, "this is a surprise! You have made papa a beautiful little present in playing that duet so prettily for me. I shall always call it the surprise duet now, and my little girl has given me great joy."

Oh! how glad I was then. It was worth all—all the trouble I had taken in practising. I think I should almost have cried when papa kissed me, only just then we heard great screams of delight from the other end of the room, where Aunt Mary had drawn the curtains aside from the wonderful pie. Daisy and Trot were jumping up and down in front of it, as if they had been made of india-rubber.

"Oh, the pie! the beautiful, beautiful pie!" they kept saying, as they danced and shouted and clapped their hands, and for a long time they did not seem to want to do anything else but look at it. I believe they never thought at all of what was inside it, the outside was so lovely, and the candle-oranges looked so pretty too, now that the tapers were lighted, and the almonds and raisins and crystallized fruits shook upon their slender stems.

"But now," said mamma, "we must cut the pie; it was not made only to be looked at; and as Trot is the youngest, she shall cut the first slice. Come Trottie, pet."

So a chair was set in front of the pie, and Trot put on the chair, and the pie turned round until the

slice with her own name upon it came to her. Then mamma held her hand whilst she cut down into the inside, and the crust was taken off and put on a plate, to be divided amongst us before we went to bed.

There seemed to be nothing but bran inside, bran just like what the rabbits eat, and Trot looked very serious. Daisy, too, standing on tiptoe and peeping into the pie, looked as if she did not know exactly what to make of it. Fancy having that for supper every night for a week. But mamma told Trot to push her hand right down underneath, and try what she could find. So she pushed and pushed, and fumbled and fumbled, and at last brought out a white paper parcel, with her own name written upon it, and a roll of paper, tied with blue ribbon, fastened to it. First of all we read what was written on the outside of the roll :—

“ A story for Aunt Mary to read.”

Ah, now the cat was out of the bag! *That* was what Aunt Mary had been so busy about, up in her little room. Those six rolls, tied with different coloured ribbons, meant six stories, and such stories too, for Aunt Mary's were far better than any we



THE OPENING OF THE PIE.



TABLE 1  
Growth of *Streptococcus faecalis* in the presence of 10% aeration in the medium

Time (h)	Growth in 10% aeration		Growth in 20% aeration	
	Optical density	Number of bacteria	Optical density	Number of bacteria
0	0.00	0	0.00	0
1	0.01	100	0.02	200
2	0.02	200	0.04	400
3	0.03	300	0.06	600
4	0.04	400	0.08	800
5	0.05	500	0.10	1000
6	0.06	600	0.12	1200
7	0.07	700	0.14	1400
8	0.08	800	0.16	1600
9	0.09	900	0.18	1800
10	0.10	1000	0.20	2000
11	0.11	1100	0.22	2200
12	0.12	1200	0.24	2400
13	0.13	1300	0.26	2600
14	0.14	1400	0.28	2800
15	0.15	1500	0.30	3000
16	0.16	1600	0.32	3200
17	0.17	1700	0.34	3400
18	0.18	1800	0.36	3600
19	0.19	1900	0.38	3800
20	0.20	2000	0.40	4000

TABLE 2  
Growth of *Streptococcus faecalis* in the presence of 20% aeration in the medium

Time (h)	Growth in 20% aeration		Growth in 30% aeration	
	Optical density	Number of bacteria	Optical density	Number of bacteria
0	0.00	0	0.00	0
1	0.02	200	0.03	300
2	0.04	400	0.06	600
3	0.06	600	0.09	900
4	0.08	800	0.12	1200
5	0.10	1000	0.15	1500
6	0.12	1200	0.18	1800
7	0.14	1400	0.21	2100
8	0.16	1600	0.24	2400
9	0.18	1800	0.27	2700
10	0.20	2000	0.30	3000
11	0.22	2200	0.33	3300
12	0.24	2400	0.36	3600
13	0.26	2600	0.39	3900
14	0.28	2800	0.42	4200
15	0.30	3000	0.45	4500
16	0.32	3200	0.48	4800
17	0.34	3400	0.51	5100
18	0.36	3600	0.54	5400
19	0.38	3800	0.57	5700
20	0.40	4000	0.60	6000

TABLE 3  
Growth of *Streptococcus faecalis* in the presence of 30% aeration in the medium

Time (h)	Growth in 30% aeration		Growth in 40% aeration	
	Optical density	Number of bacteria	Optical density	Number of bacteria
0	0.00	0	0.00	0
1	0.03	300	0.04	400
2	0.06	600	0.08	800
3	0.09	900	0.12	1200
4	0.12	1200	0.16	1600
5	0.15	1500	0.20	2000
6	0.18	1800	0.24	2400
7	0.21	2100	0.28	2800
8	0.24	2400	0.32	3200
9	0.27	2700	0.36	3600
10	0.30	3000	0.40	4000
11	0.33	3300	0.44	4400
12	0.36	3600	0.48	4800
13	0.39	3900	0.52	5200
14	0.42	4200	0.56	5600
15	0.45	4500	0.60	6000
16	0.48	4800	0.64	6400
17	0.51	5100	0.68	6800
18	0.54	5400	0.72	7200
19	0.57	5700	0.76	7600
20	0.60	6000	0.80	8000

ever read out of books, because they told us about things that really had happened. They were not make-believe at all. I skipped as merrily as Daisy and Trot then. It was almost too delightful to think that for a whole week we should have a story every night.

But the parcel was to be opened before the story was read, and Trot began to open it, looking very grave all the time. It was so funny to see her double her little mouth up with such an important air as she untied the string. There were six other little parcels inside, addressed to each of us. Trot had to carry them round and give them to the right people. Mine was a silver thimble, Aunt Mary's a book-marker, papa's a cigar-case, mamma's a set of ivory tablets, Daisy and Trot each had a purse made of net, with coloured tassels and rings of sweetmeat. Instead of money the purses were filled with comfits, which for little girls were much better. When we had all looked at our presents, and when each of us had had a comfit out of the purses, Aunt Mary began to read the story. But it shall have a chapter all to itself.

## CHAPTER IV.

## TROT'S SLICE.—THE DISOBEDIENT CHICKEN.

JENNY and Jessie were two little girls who lived at a farm-house in the country. In one of the yards of this farm was a straw-stack, out of which, at one end, a great deal of straw had been pulled away, so that the children could climb into it and scoop out nests for themselves, and sit there like little birds, almost out of sight of everybody. Sometimes in summer they used to take their work there, for in the July afternoons, when the sun was beating fiercely down upon the fields, that end of the straw-stack was in shadow, quite cool and comfortable.

So one day, when they had done their lessons, they went there to spend the rest of the time until tea. Jenny, the oldest girl, had a book with her, "The Fairchild Family," and Jessie was mending a stocking for her father. First Jessie mended whilst

Jenny read aloud, and then Jessie took the book and Jenny mended, so they got on very nicely indeed. They were reading the story of the tame magpie which Henry and Emily took out into the fields one night, and very nearly lost, because it hopped over into a lane where they were not allowed to go. Indeed they would quite have lost it, if a little ragged boy had not come up just then and thrown his jacket over it, and caught it for them.

Jessie, who was only ten years old, did not work very industriously. The poultry yard, with its eight hen-coops and as many different families of chickens, could be seen from that end of the stack, and she liked much better to look at that than to count the stitches in her stocking. It was so amusing to see the chickens racing each other after a bit of meat which one of them had found, or coming up helter-skelter, hop, skip, and jump, as an old mother hen called them to share something very nice in one of the coops. She only had to call, "cluck, cluck," and off they all ran, like school children at the sound of the dinner-bell.

Once, however, she called "cluck! cluck!" in quite a different tone, but the chickens understood it

just as well, for they all came trooping up as fast as their little bits of legs would carry them ; and almost directly afterwards, Jessie saw a bird swoop down into the poultry yard, and fly up with something in its claws. But she could not be quite sure what it was, because Jenny had just come to that part of the story where the magpie hops over into the lane ; and they were both of them so much interested in Emily's distress when she thought she had lost it, that they could not pay much attention to anything else.

But by-and-by Jessie heard the "cluck ! cluck !" again, and soon after a great black bird dropped into the midst of the poultry yard, and this time she really did see it clutch a poor little helpless chicken and fly up into the air.

" Oh ! Jenny ! Jenny !" she cried, as loud as she could.

" What is the matter ? " said Jenny, jumping up with a great start, for she thought something terrible must have happened.

Jessie could not speak ; she was too much excited. She could only point up into the air, and Jenny, following the direction of her finger, saw the hawk sailing away with the poor little chicken in its claws.

"Why, Jessie," she said, "it's that terrible hawk again, let us go as fast as ever we can and tell father. He once said if I saw it again, I was to go to him, and he would come with his gun. It's the same cruel old fellow that was here a week ago, and carried off five of mother's best chickens."

The children slipped down out of their nest in a minute, and ran across the poultry yard to look for their father. They found him in the barn, looking over some fleeces of wool, but he said he would load his gun directly and come and sit in the stack to watch, because the hawk would almost be sure to come again to the same place soon.

He told the children, however, to keep out of sight and not make any noise by talking or reading aloud. So they scooped themselves another nest, a little farther round the stack, and Jenny took the stocking, whilst Jessie read to herself the story of the magpie. First of all, though, Jenny just whispered to her sister how it was that the hens had called "*cluck, cluck,*" in that curious way. She said they always did so when there was danger near, and the chickens knew what it meant and came home—those at least

who were good and obedient—into the coop, where nothing could hurt them.

After awhile, when the two children had been sitting very quietly for perhaps ten minutes, several of the hens began to call out "*cluck! cluck!*"

"The old fellow's coming again," said Farmer Mace, as he shouldered his gun. "Look out, both of you, and be as still as mice."

Jenny and Jessie got hold of each other's hands; they were very much excited. They could not see the hawk, but it was somewhere close at hand, perhaps hiding in the elm-trees at the corner of the stack yard, waiting for a fine fat chicken to come in sight. Jessie had never heard a gun fired before, at least not so very near to her, and she began to feel rather afraid, but Jenny said as they were with their father, he would take care of them.

As you have just heard, when the hens called "*cluck, cluck,*" in that loud, sharp, impatient way, something was amiss, and the chickens knew they ought to come home at once. Perhaps a stray cat was roaming about the poultry yard, watching her opportunity for a spring; or Brag, the sheep-dog, had found his way in, and might set his great paw on







“ The hawk came swooping down.”

one of them by mistake, or give them a nip in fun, as he might have nipped a bit of old door-mat sometimes and given it a fling in the air, which was all very well for the door-mat, but quite a different thing for the chicken. Or, if it was in the early morning, when the dew was sparkling upon every blade of grass, and glittering like diamond drops from the patches of brown moss upon the old stone wall behind the coops, a sly weasel might be on the look-out for something to eat; and if he were as wise as weasels generally are, he would know well enough that nothing could be half so tasty as a fine fat yellow chicken, legs, wings, tail and everything. But, at any rate, when that sharp cry resounded through the yard, danger was not far off, and the safest place for all the little feathered folk was under the mother's wings.

This fine summer day, however, when the hawk came swooping down, and the old hens, seeing him, gave one and all their note of alarm, crying "Come home! come home! come home!" as loudly as they could cry, one little chicken called Buffie, who gave himself credit for being wiser than the rest, winked his tiny black eyes, and set his head know-

ingly on one side, and gave himself a bit of a shake, and seeing nothing alarming in the neighbourhood, thought he might as well stop out a few minutes longer. Danger indeed ! such stuff and nonsense.

There were no green-eyed cats prowling behind the straw-stack ; no huge dogs with heavy paws and mischievous fangs sauntering about, waiting for something to play with ; no sly weasels poking their sharp noses through the dewy grass, or grinding their white teeth under the hedge, ready for a bite. All was safe, and quiet, and comfortable ; why, then, should he leave the merry sunshine and huddle up into a stuffy coop, and roll himself into a lump under his mother's wing, where he could not even poke his brothers and sisters without being scolded for it, or perhaps being pushed out into a corner and told to stand there on one leg until he was a good boy again ? Go into the coop indeed, just because an old hen happened to call "*cluck, cluck !*" And Master Buffie laughed to himself as he saw the other chickens hopping away to their mothers. What little simpletons they were, to do always just as they were told !

He thought they were worse little simpletons than

ever when, after they were all safe at home, and he was scratching about by himself on the gravel, he spied a large fat caterpillar and began to gobble it up. He had never enjoyed anything so much in his life before, for there was no need to run away into a corner now, lest his brothers should come up and insist upon going shares. They were all safe enough, poor little obedient things ! And so was he. It was fine fun being out on his own account, and having everything his own way ; he would do the very same thing, yes, that he would, next time his mother called "*cluck, cluck,*" in such a wonderful bustle. No more going back to that stupid old coop now, except when the rain came, or he could not find anything to eat, or when it was bed-time and he was really too tired to do anything but tuck up under his mother's wing and go to sleep.

That was all very well ; couldn't have been anything better in the world, could there ? But just as he had dug his little beak into the fat caterpillar, and was beginning to find out how nice it tasted, a great black shadow swooped down over him ; a terrible gust of wind seemed to rush by ; he heard a flutter and flapping, as of huge wings closing over

him, and he felt himself seized in two great claws and carried off his feet, caterpillar and everything, high up into the air. To make matters worse, one of the claws had fastened itself into his leg, and was beginning to hurt him dreadfully. He shook and he struggled, and he cried "*Chip! chip! chip!*" which means "*Help! help! help!*" as loudly as he could, but it was no use. The sharp claws only stuck faster into him; the great wings kept flapping up and down, bearing him farther and farther away from his mother and brothers and sisters, and the safe shelter of the stuffy old coop.

Oh, dear! what should he do? And whose cruel eyes were those glaring down upon him? And where in the world was he being carried, up, up, far into the air, until the dear familiar poultry yard showed like only a little patch of brown, and the coops like black specks under the shelter of the mossy wall?

Oh! how he did wish then that he had obeyed his mother's voice, and run to her as soon as he heard it. How much safer, how much more comfortable, he would have been. And as he struggled feebly, for he was becoming very weak now, and cried "*Chip! chip!*" in a faint fluttering voice,

how he did wish to be one of those foolish, obedient little chickens at whom he had laughed so rudely when they ran away home to their mothers. He would never laugh at them again, no, never; he would never stop out in the yard again when his mother called him, no, never; he would never scratch about for fat caterpillars, when he ought to be tucked up safely at home, no, never, never, never.

But it was too late—too late. For the great black wings kept beating up and down, and the cruel eyes glared upon him, and the hot sun scorched him, and the sharp talons pierced his poor little foot. And then a mighty sound, as of a clap of thunder, rent all the air, and Buffie shuddered and felt that he was going to die, as the heavy black wings suddenly closed upon him, and he began to drop, faint and blind with terror, through the hot quivering air.

Ah! poor foolish little Buffie did not know that his extremity was the farmer's opportunity. He did not know that an unseen friend was standing all the while in the far-off shelter of the straw-stack, and that the thunderclap which had seemed to startle the very life out of him, was the shot which had

slain his enemy, and made the cruel talons loose their hold. Just when he thought all was over, help had come.

Jenny and Jessie were watching behind the stack. As soon as the hawk swooped down into the yard, Farmer Mace fired. He hit it as it rose into the air, after having clutched the poor chicken, and it fell quite dead. Oh, what a noise the gun made! It frightened Jessie so that she would almost have tumbled down, if Jenny had not kept fast hold of her hand. Then they all went and found the hawk lying dead upon the ground, with Buffie in his talons.

Buffie was not dead, only very much stunned, and all his feathers were ruffled up. Farmer Mace took him very gently out of the cruel talons, and found that one of his legs was cut open, just above the foot. He struggled a little, and then tumbled helplessly down in the farmer's hand, and would soon have died if he had been let alone; but Jenny said she thought if his leg were tied up carefully and nursed for a few days, he might get well again.

So they took the poor little trembling chicken, and brought it into the farm-house kitchen, and the far-

mer's wife got some strips of linen, and tied up its leg as well as she could. Poor Buffie cried "*Chip! chip!*" in a very pitiful way. Most likely he was in great pain. He must have wished he had been a good obedient boy, and gone home when his mother called him.

Jenny gave him a few crumbs of bread, steeped in milk, and laid him upon some soft flannel in a basket by the kitchen fire, and very often that day and the next, both she and Jessie went to look at him. He did get well after a very long time. First of all he stood on one leg, and then on the other, and then on both; and then he tried to hop, but he made rather funny work of hopping, because he always came down with a bump on one side. At last, however, he managed to scramble out of the basket, and in about a fortnight he was quite well again, except that the broken leg was always a little bit crooked.

But after his accident he never seemed to care to go into the poultry yard. Perhaps he was ashamed of himself, knowing what a little simpleton he had been. And partly, perhaps, it was that the other chickens found out he was lame, and made fun of him for it. Chickens are sometimes very cruel,



although they seem such nice, pretty little things. They like to tease anything that is afflicted, even if it is one of their own brothers or sisters; and often they will peck at it, and drive it about until it dies. So, after his recovery, Buffie lived almost entirely in the farm-house kitchen, only going to roost in the hen-house at night, when the other birds were too sleepy to meddle with him. By-and-by, as he grew bigger, he began to have wings and a tail, like a grown-up person, but he always limped about in a queer, up-and-down sort of way, which made you want very much to laugh at him; and quite on to the end of his life he could never think, without confusion and regret, of that sunny summer afternoon when he had been so disobedient to his kind, watchful old mother in the coop.

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All the time this story was being read, Trot never moved her eyes from Aunt Mary's face. They kept opening wider and wider, and so did her mouth, until she looked very funny indeed. When we came to the part where the hawk carries Buffie up into the air, she rose gradually from the stool where she had

been sitting, and came, step by step, nearer to Aunt Mary, until she was quite close, and when Jenny took the poor little chicken into the farm kitchen, Trot gave a big sigh of relief, and said,—

“I *so* glad.”

Daisy, too, listened very earnestly. That same evening, whilst we were having our hair curled, she told it all over again, almost word for word, to nurse; so you may be sure she must have paid great attention. When the story was done, the slice of crust which had belonged to it was cut into three pieces, one for each of us children; and having kissed every one good-night, we went off to bed, feeling as happy as any little children could feel. Now, was not that a grand opening of the bran pie?



## CHAPTER V.

## DAISY'S SLICE.—A GREAT SURPRISE.

I WAITED very eagerly for the cutting of Daisy's slice next night, not only because of the story, which I knew would be so pretty, but because of what would be found when Daisy poked her arm down into the bran. I could not help telling her that I did know what was underneath, but I would not tell her any more than that ; and though, like papa about my Christmas surprise, she guessed all sorts of funny things, she never hit upon the right one.

Isn't it delightful to have a secret ? It makes you feel so important. And for people to know that you have it too, and to keep trying to find out what it is, but you won't tell them, because that would spoil the fun. It was like always playing at the game of twenty questions. Daisy kept saying, "Is it long?" "Is it round?" "Is it short?" "What colour is

it?" "Is it hard or soft?" and so on, and I made my answers as puzzling as ever I could, so that sometimes she thought one thing and sometimes another, but never the right one.

We had a very merry Christmas Day. After church came dinner, with the plum-pudding surrounded by flames of burning brandy, which we had to blow out before mamma could begin to serve: and then dessert, and pulling crackers, and cutting apples into Christmas boxes, and making rosettes of oranges, and trussing figs with raisins so as to make them look just like poultry ready for the spit. And then we little ones were sent into the nursery to rest for a while until after tea, when the next slice was to be cut.

Daisy was to cut it. She could reach very well by standing on a stool, and she did not need to be guided like Trot, for she was very skilful with her fingers. The crust with her name upon it was put on one side, and then she pushed her arm down into the bran.

"Oh, Auntie!" she said, "something *so* big is coming up. What can it be? I don't know a bit what it feels like."

"Pull away," said Auntie, "and we shall soon see."

So Daisy pulled and pulled, and presently a long paper parcel made its appearance, with the dear little roll of paper, this time tied with pink ribbon, fastened to it. Aunt Mary put that in her pocket. When Daisy opened the parcel, she found two other long ones, with her name upon one and Trot's upon the other. And what do you think was in them?

Daisy stood quite still for awhile, in delighted astonishment. Trot danced and jumped, and so did I, because the secret was found out. Oh, joy of joys! Two dolls, dressed exactly alike, in crimson frocks and muslin pinafores, just like those which Daisy and Trot wore, and blue merino cloaks like theirs, and tiny black velvet hats with bows and ends behind. And the best of all was, that the little clothes which they had on underneath were quite properly made, just as if they had belonged to real people, only so very small, and had tapes or buttons and button-holes to them, so that they could be taken off and put on as often as you liked. And each doll's things were neatly marked, one "Daisy," the other "Trot," just as all our own things were

marked, in the smallest, prettiest little letters you ever saw.

How pleased the children were ! and I do think mamma and Aunt Mary and I, who had made the clothes, were almost as pleased. And that was not all. Each doll had a little parcel under its cloak, wrapped in white paper. When these were opened, we found in each a wee, wee night-dress bag, containing a night-dress and cap—such a pretty cap, of crochet work, with strings of pale blue ribbon. The bags were trimmed with crochet work, and feather-stitched all round, and had the proper names marked upon them, to tell which dolls they belonged to. I think those little bags were the best fun of all, they were so very like the real things that you see in shop windows, and yet so ridiculously small. Mamma had kept them a secret from me, because she thought I should be so amused.

When both Miss Dollies had been well looked at and admired and kissed, we put them on the chimney piece, one at each end, and Aunt Mary began her story.

## CHAPTER VI.

## RAGS AND DIDO.

THIS story is to be about a couple of dogs; not make-believe dogs, such as one sometimes meets in story books, but real, wide-awake, clever little terriers, who knew when they were doing wrong, yes, and when they were doing right too, as well as any boy or girl that ever lived.

Indeed they were very much like boys and girls, as most dogs are. If, instead of calling these two people Rags and Dido, they had names like ordinary little schoolboys, you might almost read the story and fancy they were boys; because boys and girls have been known to do exactly the same things, with this difference, that boys and girls will do them over and over again, whilst a dog very seldom does a naughty thing more than once, if he is punished for it the first time.

Rags' grandmamma, the lady with whom he lived, had a very beautiful garden. At one end of it was a lake, and in the midst of this lake an island, approached by a little rustic bridge. On this island was a wooden house which had originally been intended for two swans to live in, but the swans had died a little while before, and since their death grandmamma's ducks had been allowed to lay their eggs in the house and hatch their young ducklings there, because it was such a nice quiet place.

Every day, when it was fine enough for her to walk out, grandmamma used to take a basket and go round the garden, collecting the eggs. Rags knew exactly the time she went, just before luncheon, and he knew, too, that if it rained she would not go, and in that case he would lie quietly enough on his deer-skin by the window. But if the day were fine, he used to get as restless as could be. He looked first at the door, and then at the window, and then at his grandmamma, and then at the cupboard where the egg basket was kept; and when grandmamma really did begin to put on her hood and cloak, he frisked about like a little wild thing, for there was nothing in the world he liked so much as a trot round the



garden, with somebody nice to talk to him all the time.

First they used to go to the poultry houses where the mother hens lived—black Spanish, speckle, spangle, gold and silver pencil, and the other different sorts, each in a separate compartment—and then across the lawn and over the bridge to the little island, Rags trotting along with his head right up and his beautiful bushy tail waving like a banner over him, it was such fine fun to be out for an airing with grandmamma. Only he was not allowed to touch the eggs, or even to go very close to the nests, because once, when he was going round in this way, he had upset Mrs. Downie, a harmless old white duck, who was sitting as properly as could be upon her eggs, and broken up two or three and eaten them, for which piece of impertinence he had received a severe whipping. But that was nearly a year ago, and Rags was beginning to forget about it. You know young people do very easily forget their faults; and if they have been for a long time, say nearly a year, without doing anything remarkably naughty, they almost feel as if they need not be careful any more.

So grandmamma went into the duck house, and in Mrs. Downie's nest she found two eggs, one of which she put into her basket, leaving the other half hidden under the hay. So long as one egg is left in a nest, the duck will come back regularly and lay another to it; but if all the eggs are taken away, Mrs. Downie thinks that is rather too much of a good thing, and she goes off and lays the rest of her eggs where grandmamma or other people don't know where to find them.

But though Rags was a very clever dog, he didn't know about what ducks like and what they don't like. He stood at the door of the little house, looking in very wisely whilst grandmamma peeped into each nest; and when he saw that she left one egg in Mrs. Downie's place, he thought she had forgotten it, and he said to himself,—

“Grandmamma doesn't know about that egg under the hay. I'll have it for my dinner. Such a large one too, and nobody will find me out. Oh, what fun!”

So when grandmamma came out, he loitered about until she was safely out of sight, ever so far down the tower walk, and then he popped into Mrs.

Downie's nest, gave the egg a neat little tap, and sucked all the inside out. He had not time to enjoy it quite as he would have liked, for he expected every moment to hear his grandmamma calling; but still it was very good, and when it was done he stuffed the shell away under the hay, and trotted off down the tower walk, with his tail up in the air, as if nothing had happened.

But how stupid dogs are, quite the cleverest of them! They will lick their lips after they have been eating anything, even if they have stolen it; and when Rags overtook his grandmamma he was licking his lips too, and she knew that he had been tasting something very nice.

"Rags!" she said, "where have you been, and what are you doing? Why, you naughty dog, you don't mean to say, do you, that you have been into the duck's house, and meddled with the eggs?"

"Oh, dear, no! grandmamma, nothing of the sort," said Rags, putting his hands in his pockets, and looking as unconcerned as possible. "I wouldn't do such a thing on any account. Make yourself quite easy, dear madam."

Rags said this so jauntily because he thought

grandmamma did not know there was an egg left in the nest at all. But grandmamma did know, and, what was worse still, she saw some of the yolk of that egg sticking to the fluffy white hair under Rags' chin; for as he didn't know he was going to dine in Mrs. Downie's nest, he had not brought a serviette with him, and raw eggs are rather awkward things to eat neatly. So grandmamma found out all about it, and Rags got such a whipping as he had not had for many a day; and for a whole month after that naughty trick he was not allowed to go out again when the eggs were collected. He remembered next time.

Dido, the other dog who lived with grandmamma, was a very neat, particular little lady, with the smoothest of black-and-tan coats, and such large soft brown eyes, and the most delicate, shapely little paws that were ever seen.

She very seldom went out of doors, for she prided herself on being somewhat of an invalid; and as for jumping and capering and making a jackanapes of herself like Rags, why, Dido turned away in disgust if you mentioned such a thing to her.

But she was very clever. You will be amused

when you hear what her special piece of cleverness was. Gracie, one of grandmamma's daughters, had taught her to do it. She used to sit on a low wicker chair by Gracie's side at dinner, and when Sarah, the maid, was wanted for anything, instead of ringing the bell, Gracie used to say,—

“Dido, go and tell Sarah.”

And Dido used to bustle off her chair, trot away out of the door, across the hall, down the kitchen stairs, and pull the corner of Sarah's apron. Sarah knew what that meant, it meant that she was to come up into the dining-room. When Dido came back to her chair, she always had a bit of meat given to her, or a chicken bone, or something nice.

At first, when Gracie was training her, she did not have the meat until after Sarah had come up, so that it might be quite certain she had done her work properly; but by-and-by, when Gracie found that she always did go down into the kitchen, that rule was relaxed, and Dido got her tit-bit as soon as she came back to her chair.

One day it was very cold, very cold indeed, and Dido had been lying all the morning muffled up under her deer-skin. She did not come out of it at all,

except to take her place on the wicker chair at dinner-time. When Sarah was wanted, Gracie said as usual,—

“Now, Dido, go and tell Sarah.”

Dido shrugged her shoulders. She did not much like going across that cold hall and down those draughty stairs. However, as that was her only chance of earning a bit of meat, and Dido dearly loved eating, although she was such an elegant lady, she went off. But at the top of the kitchen stairs her resolution failed her, and she said to herself,—

“Now why in the world need I trot all the way down those draughty stairs, and up again, getting the east wind on my chest, and perhaps catching bronchitis, which dear Dr. Plausible said I was to avoid if possible? I’ll just stand here a little while, and go back again and take my place as if I really had been down into the kitchen, and then I shall get my piece of meat; and, to tell the truth, I do need it very much, for I feel such a sinking. I can hardly express it. Ah! what a thing it is to have such poor health. There’s that vulgar Rags, he never knows what it is to have an ache or pain. But as for myself——”

Dido stopped about a minute, and then came back to her chair as if everything was quite right, and the piece of meat was given her, and she ate it with a sweetly resigned expression. Really this English climate was almost too much for her, she must ask the coachman to have advice for her again, and suggest a change of air down to the kitchen, where nice little pieces of food were always to be had when she felt that dreadful sinking.

Gracie waited, but Sarah never came. After they had been sitting for some time, she said,—

“Grandmamma, I do believe Dido has been playing us a trick. You know she came back very soon. I don’t think she could have had time to go down to the kitchen and up again.”

“We won’t ring,” said grandmamma. “We will just sit quite still, and see what she will do. The naughty little thing, and to take her piece of meat, too.”

So they sat and waited and waited, without ever saying another word, only sometimes they looked very hard at Dido. By-and-by she began to fidget about and look very uncomfortable, for she was a very sensitive person. Indeed she prided herself almost

as much upon her sensitiveness as upon her delicate health, and would become wounded or "morbid" upon the slightest provocation. She had a conscience, too, and it was pricking her, for she knew what an unladylike thing she had been doing. First she turned her head away, and then she looked at grandmamma out of the corners of her eyes, and then she winked and shuffled about, and began to wash her paws, and tried to appear as if she knew nothing about anything. Still grandmamma and Gracie sat quite still in front of their empty plates. Not a word was spoken, and they both looked so hard at poor Dido.

At last she could bear it no longer. With a deeply wounded and penitent air, she slipped off her seat, sidled out of the room, going as far round as ever she could, under the sofa and behind the piano, so as to keep out of sight, for she did feel very much ashamed, and so across the hall, and downstairs to Sarah, who thought dinner was taking an unusually long time to-day.

It was no use going back to her chair, for there would be no second piece of meat for her; so she returned quietly to her deer skin, and remained



there for the rest of the day. What her reflections might be, who can tell? All that can be said is, that she looked very sheepish, and if ever she caught Gracie's eye or grandmamma's, she turned and twisted and wriggled about, and did not seem to know where to put herself. But never after that did Dido play false again when told to go and fetch Sarah.



## CHAPTER VII.

NOBODY'S SLICE.—A LITTLE PIECE OF MISCHIEF.

I SCARCELY liked to own it, but I must say that I had felt slightly uncomfortable whilst Aunt Mary was telling this story of Dido. The part about Rags was very amusing indeed. What a stupid dog, to go and lick his lips after he had been eating the egg! Why, he might be sure he would be found out. He reminded me of a little boy who was once staying with us. He was very fond of lighting strips of paper and whirling them round, so that the lighted end showed like a circle in the air. Mamma had forbidden him to do this, because he might set himself or some one else on fire; but he was a naughty boy, and used to do it over and over again, when he thought no one saw him. One day when he was doing it, he heard mamma coming into the nursery, and he stuffed the bit of paper—

when he had blown the light out—up his pinafore, where he thought it would be out of sight. When mamma came in, she said,—

“Some one has been playing with fire; Georgie, is it you?”

“No, ma’am,” said Georgie, turning very red, but trying to look as if nothing was the matter.

And all the time there was the end of paper sticking out under his pinafore, and smoking away towards the fireplace.

Foolish, naughty Georgie! He was sent to bed, and very soon after that he was sent home, for mamma did not want to keep little boys who told falsehoods. But was it not very like Rags and Mrs. Downie’s egg? Rags thought he was quite safe; he did not know of the yellow yolk sticking to his fluffy coat, and so he got a whipping, and richly he deserved it. Georgie has grown up to be a big boy now, but he has had many and many a trouble far worse to bear than the hardest whipping, because he would not learn to be obedient and speak the truth.

I don’t believe little boys and girls ever dislike stories which tell them about the faults of other people. It is only when their own little naughty

ways are described that they like the book to be shut up. So all the time that Aunt Mary was reading about Rags I was as pleased as could be; but when she came to Dido it was different altogether. I thought she must have made the story on purpose for me, because I had been doing something rather like that. And yet how could Aunt Mary have found out, because my playmate Lucy had never been to our house since? I kept glancing up to see if my Aunt's eyes were fixed upon me. No, they never were, and when the story was done, she did not look at me either, except to say in a very pleasant tone,—

“ Well, Alice, do you like it ? ”

I tried to smile and say, “ Yes, Auntie, very much,” but I don't think I made much of a smile; after all, I would rather have jumped up and run out of the room, only then every one would have known that something was the matter. However, Aunt Mary did not take any notice, and soon after the slice of crust was divided amongst us and we went to bed.

I think I may as well tell you, right straight out, what I had been doing.

About a fortnight before Christmas, Aunt Mary had wanted a knot of gold braid, to finish something very pretty which she was making for papa. Before you come to the end of this book, you will find out what it was. She was so busy helping mamma to do heaps of things in the house, that she had no time to go into the town herself and buy the braid; and so one day, about half an hour before I was going to have my music lesson, she asked me to go and buy it for her.

Now I, too, wanted very much to go into the town, to buy half a yard of ribbon to finish the book-mark which I was making for that first parcel in the bran pie. But the shop where I had to go for ribbon was in exactly the opposite direction to Miss Baker's embroidery shop, and as there was only half an hour before my music lesson, I could not go to both places. However, I put the money for the ribbon in my pocket, for I thought perhaps if Miss Baker was very quick in serving me, I might possibly be able to run off as far as the draper's shop, and get back in time for my lesson.

When I had been gone about five minutes, I met Lucy. She said she was going to Miss Baker's to

buy some wool to knit a kettle-holder for her grand-mamma. So I asked her to take the pattern of braid which Aunt Mary had given me, and get a knot like it, whilst I went to the draper's shop for my ribbon, and then she was to wait at her gate for me—our houses were next door to each other—and give me what she had got.

All right, there was no harm in that, so far. I walked away quite comfortably now, got my ribbon, stopped for five minutes on the way home to look at a Punch-and-Judy show—which was not naughty either—and reached our gate just as Lucy got up to it with the braid. I gave it to Aunt Mary; it was quite right, exactly like the pattern; indeed I was sure Lucy would get it better than I should, for she knew a great deal about such things.

“Thank you, Alice, you are a good little girl. Mr. Martin has been waiting a few minutes for you, but I tell him he must not scold you, because you were doing an errand for me, and perhaps you might have to wait. Run away quick now, and take off your hat.”

How foolish I was not to tell her all about it then! If I had said that I wanted very much to

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get some ribbon for myself, and so I had asked Lucy to get the braid for me, Aunt Mary wouldn't have been a bit vexed, for there was no harm in it. And even if I had told her that I stopped five minutes to look at Punch and Judy, she wouldn't have minded that either, for she liked Punch and Judy very much herself, and would always take us into a shop to watch it, if we were out with her and saw the delightful old wooden thing getting ready for an exhibition. But, like a stupid little goose, I did not say anything. I let her think that I had bought the braid myself, and that waiting for it at Miss Baker's had made me late.

I was very tiresome at my music lesson that morning, so that Mr. Martin did scold me after all. I could not pay attention to what I was doing, because all the time I was feeling uncomfortable about that braid. I thought I would tell Aunt Mary everything as soon as my lesson was over; but when I set off to go to her little room, I did not know how to begin my story, everything had got into a muddle, and it did not seem worth making a fuss about, and so I decided to let it slip through altogether; and nothing had ever been said about it, and I had almost

forgotten it until this night, when Aunt Mary's story brought it all back again.

Now you can understand, can you not? why the account of Miss Dido's funny little trick was not quite pleasant for me to listen to. However, I did not say anything even then.

Next evening we did not have a story at all, because of something which Daisy and Trot had been doing. I don't think they would mind my telling you about it, as they were such very little girls when it happened; and, besides, they were very sorry, and promised never to do it again. Then, too, as I have told you what I did that was naughty, it does not seem like tittle-tattling to tell you what they did.

We were always made tidy after tea, before coming into the drawing-room to see the bran pie opened. This evening nurse had taken great pains with us, and made us look very nice indeed. Then she told Daisy and Trot to sit in their little chairs, and she gave them their dolls to play with, and said they were to stay there until she came back to them. She was going into the night nursery to make it all ready for them before they went to bed; and as I



was very fond of helping, she told me I might be her little housemaid, and turn down the beds, and put our towels straight, and our combs and brushes away.

Daisy and Trot were very still, but that did not surprise us at all, because we expected they were playing with their pretty new dolls. Alas! when nurse came back, she found that they had been doing nothing of the sort. Instead of playing with their dolls, they had been playing with the coals in the pan, and oh, what little objects they had made of themselves! They had rubbed their fingers on the coals, and then on each other's faces, and then they had wiped their hands on their pinafores—the pretty muslin pinafores which had been clean on only half an hour before. They were so absorbed in this delightful occupation that they did not see us come into the nursery. Trot was holding up her round face for Daisy to paint a huge pair of eyebrows upon it, meanwhile rubbing her own little fat hands upon a great piece of coal, in readiness to perform the same kind office for her sister.

I was going to laugh, only the sight of nurse's astonishment restrained me. They looked exactly

like the pictures of idols in the "Children's Missionary Magazine," with those black spots and circles, and lines and dabs all over their faces. Indeed I do believe it was the sight of those pictures which had put the notion into Daisy's head, for nurse had been showing them to her in the morning, and telling her how thankful she ought to be that she lived in a country where people did not pray to such ugly things. Poor nurse! I daresay she would not have been quite so anxious to draw forth Daisy's gratitude, if she could have foreseen how the practical illustration of idolatry would have impressed itself on the child's mind as a suitable object for imitation.

"Miss Daisy! Miss Daisy!" she cried, "and you seven years old next birthday, and that beautiful pinafore clean out of your drawer not half an hour back; and both of you sitting on your stools like good children, as I told you you weren't to stir off them till I came again. What *will* your Auntie say to you, then?"

Daisy and Trot made a rush for the window curtains. They had been told never to play with the coals, and their faces showed very red, even through

all the dirt and black, when they heard nurse's voice. But she brought them out of their hiding-place, and made them look at themselves in the glass. What little objects they were, to be sure!

"There, then, do you think you're fit to go down and hear a pretty story from your Auntie Mary, with such a pair of faces? And who's to take the trouble to wash you over again and put you on your clean pinafores and everything? Oh, you naughty, naughty girls!"

Daisy and Trot cried very much when they saw themselves in the glass; but the cries came louder, and the tears fell faster, when nurse told them they must go down and let mamma see them. At least Daisy must go, because, being the oldest, she ought to have known better than to get into mischief so.

Poor Daisy sobbed, and said she would never, never do it again; but nurse took hold of her hand and led her away, whilst I staid behind with Trottie, who was doubled up all in a heap on the hearth-rug, crying as if her heart would break.

"Oh, Trottie!" I said, "why did you do it? You know nurse told you never to play with the coal-pan."

"I did forget," said Trottie, with a big sob between every word, "and Daisy did set me on a reexample."

It sounded so funny, but I did not like to laugh. Ah! it was the old, old story over again. Just like Adam laying the blame upon Eve when God asked him why he had eaten the fruit; and Eve laid the blame upon the serpent. They neither of them liked to own that they had been very naughty themselves. But, whilst I was talking to Trot, nurse came back with Daisy, crying more bitterly than ever. Mamma had said that the two little girls were not to come downstairs at all this evening, but, instead, to go to bed directly. She said she should not have felt so displeased with them if it had only been mischief, but as they had been told never to meddle with the coals, it was disobedience too, which is worse than mischief.

Poor Daisy and Trot! No bran pie that night, and no sweet crust, and no story, and no white paper parcel. Oh, how they did cry, and how the tears did run down over their grimy faces!

What a pity it is that we can't be punished before our faults, instead of after them! I don't think we

should do wrong half so often then. If any one had said to Daisy and Trot—"Now, if you like to be sent to bed to-night, instead of opening the bran pie and hearing the story, you may play with the coals for a quarter of an hour to-morrow morning," do you think they would have cared to do it? Not they. Because the punishment was really so much worse than the little bit of pleasure that they got out of the mischief.

So they were washed and tucked up in bed, and I had to go downstairs by myself. That was very stupid work. Half the fun of the bran pie to me—excepting of course the story—was seeing my little cousins jump and caper so merrily when it was opened. However, I knew it was no use teasing mamma to let them come down again; but I did ask her if, as it was my turn to cut the pie, she would let me wait until next evening, when we could all be together again. She said all right, so I ran upstairs to tell Daisy and Trot.

I found them crying quietly in their beds, expecting that the pie was being cut and the story told whilst they were fast tucked up there, out of the way: and you may be sure they were glad enough when they

found that everything was to be saved until next night.

When I came down again I felt dreadfully uncomfortable. Here poor Daisy and Trot were being punished for their little bit of naughtiness, when mine about that braid, which I had never confessed, was snugly wrapped up out of sight, no one knowing anything about it. It was very disagreeable having to poke it up again, but I felt I should despise myself always if I did not say what I had done. However, there was no need to tell papa and mamma, as they had had nothing to do with it. I would only tell Aunt Mary.

So when she came to say good-night to me in my crib, for I slept in her room then, I kept my arms fast around her neck and I whispered,—

“Aunt Mary, I have got something I want to say to you.”

“Well, Alice, what is it? Another secret belonging to the bran pie?”

“Oh, no; not at all; but I have been keeping it until I can’t keep it any longer. Aunt Mary, did you write that story about Dido on purpose for me?”

"No," said Aunt Mary, looking very much surprised.

"Are you quite sure you did not think about me at all, when you were reading it?"

"No, not at all, Alice; except that I thought it would amuse you very much, and I was rather surprised that you did not seem to care for it. You scarcely laughed at all."

"No, Aunt Mary, because I thought you had been making it on purpose for me, and I did feel so uncomfortable; and I did mean to tell you a long time ago, only everything got mixed up so, and it didn't seem to be any use."

And then I told her everything, just as I have told you at the beginning of this chapter.

Aunt Mary kissed me. She said she was very glad that I had not been able to feel comfortable, because even if I had forgotten for a little while, I could never have put it quite out of sight. And, besides, Lucy might have said, some time, quite innocently, that she had bought the braid, and then I must have explained it all, and it would have seemed as if I had wanted to hide it. After that, I felt as if a great load had been rolled away from me. But

wasn't it strange that Aunt Mary should have told us a story so very much like what I had been doing myself?

Next evening we were all bright and happy and comfortable again, and it was my turn to cut the pie.

What do you think I found underneath the crust, snugly tucked in amongst the bran? A little make-believe packing case, like those that you sometimes see on draymen's carts in front of music warehouses, with the name "Broadwood" upon it, and under "To be delivered immediately." When I opened it, there was a piano inside—a doll's piano, with a keyboard and music desk and pedals, and places for candles to stand on. And when you turned a handle at one end, it played a tune—"Home, sweet home."

Papa said he had bought a little box of sweetmeats for me, but after I had played the duet for him, he thought this would be nicer. So did I, a great deal nicer. This would last me all my life, and everybody else could be pleased with it too. When we had made it play its tune many times, we set it on the table and put one of my dolls in front of it, as if she were practising, and then Aunt Mary began the story.



## CHAPTER VIII.

## MY SLICE.—THE STORY OF GURGLES.

GURGLES was born at the top of one of the highest mountains in Scotland. There were only a few drops of him at first ; indeed a moderate-sized person might have drunk him up at a mouthful, and that was what some of the cabinet council of the Queen Consort in whose dominions he was born wanted to do. But they dare not do it without first going in solemn procession to the Queen, who sat on a throne in front of her spinning-wheel, spinning, spinning, always spinning, and asking her if she would condescend to stand up for a moment and look at this new baby, as he was too small to make a journey to the court on his own account.

The Queen arose very slowly, and turned her great, round, quiet eyes towards the mountain top, where little Gurgles was struggling for life amongst a lot

of loose earth, which would very soon have made an end of him if no one had interfered.

"May it please your Majesty," said the Sun, prime minister of the government, "he is a weakly, fretful little fellow, and you have already plenty of his sort in this part of your dominions. Indeed, the pigmy creatures calling themselves men and women, who live in Scotland, say that the country is overrun with them. If you will allow me, I will look steadily at him for half an hour or so, and turn him into a white cloud, in which capacity we can make far more use of him."

"Yes, gracious Sovereign," said another member of the council, North Wind, who was generally on quarrelsome terms with the prime minister, but could make it up when his own interest required, "and I will blow him down towards some of the English farms, where they are wanting a little rain just now for their turnips. It is not much that he can do in that way, to be sure, but he may as well help."

"Exactly so," said Messrs. Flint and Gravel, who did a great deal of contractors' work for the Queen, "or we will send you in an estimate for building up

a wall round him, to force him down into the ground again. That is not quite so bad as killing him outright, for most likely he would poke his head out somewhere else, where he would be more useful. Over in the east, for instance, where they say it never rains enough."

But the Queen looked earnestly at him, and then made a sign to her people to go away. This Queen, whose name was Nature, never did speak out loud like other queens; she only made signs, which, however, the members of the government understood perfectly. But the queer little people, the pigmies, who lived in some parts of her dominions, did not understand them half so well, and often made the most ridiculous mistakes, thinking that the Queen wanted them to do one thing, when in reality she meant just the contrary.

The sign which the Queen made now, meant that little Gurgles should live. Then she sat down, gathered her long white robes about her and began to spin again.

Her prime minister had some very important business to do amongst the mountains just then, so the Queen did not command him entirely away, but

she sent a detachment of clouds to stand between him and baby Gurgles, so that the poor child might not be quite dried up. And she motioned the North Wind to his foreign station on the top of an iceberg, and directed Messrs. Flint and Gravel to fall backward, so as to give the baby room to stretch himself.

“He only wants letting alone,” she said to herself as she turned the great wheel, “and he will be all right. If these pigmies of mine, down in the plains, did but know how much good is done by letting things alone, what a convenient thing it would be for them ! They would not get into half so many troubles. I wish the King would allow me to speak to them sometimes in their own language. I would soon set them straight then.”

For these pigmies were everlastingly swarming round the Queen Consort, and asking her the most ridiculous questions ; indeed, some of them were more than ridiculous, they were absolutely impertinent. Once, for instance, a grey-headed fellow, who thought himself wonderfully wise, insisted upon knowing how old she was ; a subject on which even the smallest child might be sure a lady never likes

to be questioned. The Queen disdained to reply, except by pointing to a chain of pearls which she wore outside her robe. Every anniversary of her coronation day, a fresh pearl was added to this chain, so that if any one could count the jewels, and find out at what age the Queen was crowned, he would soon know how old she was. Some of the pigmies had already counted six thousand of them, but then the chain got out of sight somehow underneath her robe; and though they had peeped and pried and poked about, and tried to get hold of it to pull a few more pearls out, they had never been able to get to the end.

At which the Queen only smiled. But we are forgetting Gurgles.

For some time after he really knew that he was going to live, he lay kicking and sprawling on the mountain top, as happy as any little baby could be. By-and-by he was able to look the prime minister in the face without being the least bit afraid of him. He was even saucy enough to wink occasionally at that important individual; and once he actually snapped his fingers at him, without any serious consequences. Then he thought he should like to see





“The little boys dabbled about.”

how things were going on a little lower down in the world. So, after looking for a sign from his Queen—for he was a very obedient subject, all the real people in her dominions were, the pigmies only were ever disloyal—he began to skip and jump down the mountain side, giving a familiar nod to the Sun sometimes, who seemed quite disposed to be friendly now; smiling merrily to the clouds who had kept him alive when he was a baby; kicking and pushing at the gravel—you see he was old enough to be quarrelsome; and sometimes—I don't think I need be ashamed to say it—giving soft, sweet kisses to the little girl blossoms who came close up to him to have drops of water put into their blue and white and yellow cups.

At last he got down into the country where the pigmies lived, and there things were not quite so pleasant. For these people thought that Gurgles was made for nothing but to serve their own purposes. First of all, a troop of the little boy pigmies dabbled about in him with their dirty feet, which made him dreadfully indignant, and he scolded them as well as he was able in his own language, and clapped his hands together, and kicked and shouted.



But they only laughed, and thought he was doing it to amuse them.

"Look!" they cried, "what pretty splashes and dashes and breakers it makes. It's a real jolly little brook."

"And so they call me 'it,'" said Gurgles, scornfully. "Well, poor things! they don't know any better."

And he ran away farther down into the valley, as fast as he could; but matters were not at all improved there; for the longer he ran, the stronger he grew, and the pigmies seemed to think of nothing but how they might make use of him. Of course, he knew that he ought to be useful to his own Queen; that was a different thing altogether, and being useful to her only made him happier and more beautiful. The Queen never wanted him to do anything that was disagreeable. Sometimes he had to water the little blades of grass, and splash about amongst the tall, graceful reeds; and he had to make a cool, sparkling bed for the minnows and sticklebacks, and a nursery for the baby dragon-flies, and a soft rocking couch for the white water-lilies; all sweet and pleasant things to do—things which

made him happy in the doing of them. But these pigmies, wherever they touched him, it was to spoil him. The women brought their dirty clothes to him to wash—ugh! and they threw all sorts of refuse into him; and if ever they had any filthy mess they wanted to get rid of—bad eggs, rotten fruit, decaying vegetables, “Oh, throw it into the river,” they cried, as coolly as could be; “it will be all right there!”

“All right, indeed,” said Gurgles. “But what about me, I should like to know?”

The only way in which he could keep at all clean was to run on as fast as ever he could, so leaving the nasty stuff behind. But the faster he ran and the stronger he grew, the worse it became for him; for by-and-by the grown-up pigmies, who saw how stout and sturdy he was, came and stood on his banks, and stared at him, and thrust their long sticks down to find how deep he was, and said one to another,—

“Gurgles is big enough now to be of some use in the world.”

“Use in the world,” said Gurgles to himself, “as if I were not serving my own Queen every day

and hour of my life ! These pigmies think that nobody is of any 'use' unless he is doing something for them, forsooth ! Such arrogance !”

Gurgles jumped up as high as ever he could, and sent a lot of water into their faces. He thought that would stop them, but it did nothing of the sort. It only showed them how strong he was.

“Splendid water power !” they said ; “why, there’s force enough here to turn a mill. Gurgles could do us no end of good if we only set him to it.”

And they did set him to it. A lot of them got together with their spades and pickaxes and levels, and built an ugly great shed close to him ; and then they got fast hold of Gurgles and tied him tight round the middle of his back, so that he could scarcely move, but was obliged to lie still in a narrow box they made for him ; and at the end of this box they put a wheel, and the desperate struggles which the poor river made to get out of his prison turned the wheel round.

That was all the pigmies wanted, to get their wheel turned round. They did not care how Gurgles hurt himself in getting out of the box ; that was not their business. He might spend his whole life

in torture, if they could but make him do their work, and earn money for them—the selfish, greedy creatures.

But it is only fair to say that they behaved just as badly to each other, when they had the chance. The strong ones used to get as much out of the weak ones as they could ; until a stronger still came, and then they were oppressed themselves. Served them right, too. Gurgles laughed right well to himself when he saw it. And all the time these pigmies thought themselves so wonderfully good and wise.

Well, the poor fellow got away at last, working himself free by turning his enemy's wheel ; but his troubles thickened as he travelled on. Sometimes he was brown, and grey, and purple, and black for weeks together with the filth the pigmies poured into him from their dye vats and chemical works. One day the Queen's prime minister, passing over that part of the country, looked down upon him and said,—

“ What! *you* call yourself a river ; why, I shouldn't have known you for one, you dirty, disreputable scamp. You ought to be ashamed of yourself.”

So he was, only he didn't like to tell the Sun so.

And the forget-me-nots never held out their blue cups to him now, and the water-lilies never asked leave to be rocked to sleep upon his bosom. They could not bear to be seen in his company. And though Gurgles told them, even with tears in his eyes, that it was not his fault, the pigmies had done it all, that did not make any difference. They said they were very sorry, very sorry indeed ; but, really, it was as much as their characters were worth now to have anything to do with him.

And still he grew—nothing ever stopped that—and the pigmies launched their great dirty coal barges upon him, and walled him in with ugly wharves and warehouses, so that he had no room to dance and caper any more ; no room for anything but to trudge wearily, wearily on. If he did struggle out sometimes towards a green field, they soon got hold of him again, and made him carry still heavier burdens for them. Poor Gurgles ! the days were very dreary days for him now. How sadly he looked back to his childhood on that far-away mountain top, when as yet he knew nothing about the pigmies and their evil ways ! Nay, sometimes he wished the Sun had been allowed to turn him into a white cloud, for then

at any rate he should have been able to keep himself clean, and the pigmies could not have got hold of him. And he would cry out to his Queen to help him, but she never did. She sat there on her throne, spinning, spinning, always spinning, and looked at him out of her great quiet eyes, which seemed to have no soul in them; and spoke not a word.

One day, when he could really bear up no longer, he thought he would ask the Sun for a little light on the subject. Was he always to go on like this, getting worse and worse, having more and more work to do, for people who never gave him a word of thanks? Was there no hope of anything better?

So he stopped him one day, as he was going his rounds, and making a low bow—for Gurgles was a well-behaved river, and the Queen's prime minister was a person who thought a great deal of himself—he said,—

“Might it please your Excellency to tell me where I am going, and what will be the end of all my work?”

The Sun opened his eyes so wide that Gurgles was quite dazzled.

“Pray who put such silly questions into your

head?" he answered. "What is it to you where you are going, so long as you know you have got to go?"

"Please your Excellency, I think it's a great deal to me," said Gurgles, meekly.

"Then you think wrong. Just you keep straight ahead, and don't ask any questions. That's all you've got to think about, keeping straight ahead. I never think about anything else, and I'm a great deal bigger person than you are."

"Yes, indeed," said Gurgles.

"Yes, indeed. And if I'm content to do my work without asking questions, why a little fellow like you ought to be well content to do the same. Any goose of a river might have known that, without asking."

So the Sun went proudly on, and Gurgles went wearily on.

A few days after, as he was toiling under a load of coal barges and market boats, he came up to a great moss-covered ridge of rock, in the middle of a common. As it had been sitting quietly there for more than a thousand years, it might reasonably be supposed to know a little about something; so Gurgles stopped for a moment or two.

"I say, old fellow," he began—you know the rock did not make quite such a show in the world as the prime minister, and therefore need not be spoken to so respectfully—"I say, old fellow, can you tell me the meaning of all this? What have I done that our gracious Queen should allow me to be oppressed in this way? I'm sure I've always tried to serve her to the best of my ability, and I used to water the little flowers, and take care of my minnows and sticklebacks, and do my work as faithfully as if I had been the most important river in her dominions. Why, then, has she cast me out like this, and left me to these wretched pigmies? And if I cry to her she does not answer me."

The ridge of rock shrugged his big round shoulders.

"The Queen Consort can't help you," he said, gruffly. "She can only do as she's told. She tells us all what we're to do, but somebody tells her."

"You don't say so," said Gurgles, much surprised. "I didn't know there was anybody else."

"Oh, yes! we have a King, and he really governs everything, only people think the Queen does it, because she sits on the throne, and everybody can



see her. They can't see the King, though he's always round about somewhere."

"Oh! I thought the Queen did all the business."

"Business!" and the old rock shrugged his shoulders again, "business, indeed! If you hit her, she hits back again; and if you let her alone, she lets *you* alone. That's about all the business *she* does, I fancy."

"Well, but," said Gurgles, "things are getting worse and worse with me. These pigmies will wear my very life out soon. I declare I never have a bit of peace now; and as for enjoying myself, why I haven't so much as a moment to think about that. It's just work and worry from morning to night. And yet, if I only knew what was to be the end of it, I could be a little more content. Where am I going, do you think, and what will become of me?"

"Ah, that's what I don't know, and I don't suppose the Queen Consort can tell you either. She's kept me sitting here for a thousand years or more, and I don't know yet what's to become of me. I do know, though, that as long as I stay here, I keep the east wind from that little valley behind me, so that the farmers can grow better corn there than in all the

country round, and that's enough for me. I think you can't do better than just go along, without asking questions."

Gurgles turned sadly away.

"I *should* like to know what will become of me, though," he murmured, as the great heavy coal barges pressed him down. "But, perhaps, one day I shall see the King, and he will tell me something."

And he did see the King, not very long after. It was in the cool of the evening, just as he had struggled out of a narrow, dirty town, and lay panting under the shelter of a fir plantation. Not far away was another town, through which he knew he must travel; but here, at least for a little while, was rest. The King was pacing slowly along a meadow on the opposite side. He was a tall, grave man. Behind him, where he had trodden, was a track of lilies, white as the snow when it falls on mountain tops where the pigmies cannot come.

Gurgles cried out, with a great and bitter cry :—

"Oh, King! have pity on me, and hear me when I call!"

The King turned and looked. His eyes were full

of tenderness ; his voice was soft and low as the west wind when it brings the summer-time.

"What does my little Gurgles want?" he said, stooping down over the poor tired river. And even as he breathed upon it, its waters became clearer, and its burdens very light.

"Oh, King!" said Gurgles, "I work and I am tired, and there is no rest for me. And I do not know whither I am going."

"Take hold of me," said the King, "and lift yourself up, and look away yonder," and the King pointed to the west.

Gurgles took hold of the King, and raised himself as high as he could, and looked away towards the sunset.

Oh, how bright, how beautiful! Far off, beyond the smoky towns, beyond the fields, beyond the woods, beyond the grey mountains, beyond everything else that he could see, stretched a great expanse of the softest, tenderest, deep blue sea. And the wind blew lightly over it, curling it into little waves, whose crests were tipped with silver flakes of foam; and vessels with white sails, as of ivory and pearl, moved slowly over it, and a glory from the sky

shone down upon it, and it was very fair to see.

Water too—water just like himself. He belonged to it, he felt ; and it belonged to him, though it was so beautiful and pure and restful, and he was so soiled and tired.

“That is your home,” said the King ; “you are going to it all the while. Have patience, and you will one day be at rest.”

Then, with a sweet smile, he went silently away.

How gladly Gurgles did his work after that. True, it was very hard, and the pigmies were very cruel to him, and heavy were the burdens he had to bear ; but always when he had time to be quiet, he used to call upon the name of the King, and lift up himself, and look far away to the calm blue sea, his home, his native land ; and he was strong again.

Until one day, when his load had been very heavy, and he was almost worn out with toiling through the hot, dusty towns, he lifted himself up in the cool of the evening, to look westward for the sea, and lo ! there was no sea, only a flat grey mist steaming up over fields and meadows and plantations ; flat grey mist through which no ray of light could strike, nor

any, even the faintest, gleam of his native land be seen.

It was all a dream, then, that the King had ever come to him, and pointed whither his journey led. There was no home for him, where storms never came, and where his burdens would be lifted off. With a low, despairing sigh, as of one who has no more any hope, Gurgles slipped down to his place again. He was too sad even to cry out for the King to come and help him.

But the King knew that he was in trouble, and came to him without being sent for. He was a kind, merciful King, often doing so when he knew that the poor people in his dominions were too full of heaviness to think of him. Gurgles, toiling silently on beneath his mud barges and sand rafts, saw the grave face bending over him, and heard the sweet voice of the King saying,—

“I know what it is, Gurgles ; you need not tell me. You have been looking for the great sea, and you cannot find it any more, and you are full of sorrow.”

“Yes, indeed I am, O gentle King !” said Gurgles, “for it seems to me now that there is

nothing for me but that I should evermore go on in weariness and pain. Almost I wish you had never shown me the beautiful blue ocean, than that, having seen it once, I should afterwards seek it in vain."

"You do not seek it in vain," said the King, smiling. "The Sun has turned your own tears into a mist, and spread them out before you, so that you cannot see anything. Lean on me, and look forth again."

The King stretched out his hand to part the thick grey clouds. Gurgles leaned on him and looked up, and all was clear again. There, far off, gleamed the deep blue sea, with its silver-crested ripples, and the white sails, as of ivory and pearl, slowly moving over it.

"It is always there, Gurgles. Next time you look for it and cannot find it, remember that it is there just the same, only some one has hidden it from you. Wait and have patience, and you will see it again by-and-by."

Then the King went away.

Gurgles toiled on cheerily enough after that. The Sun, going his rounds next day, was quite astonished

to see what a load the river was carrying, and carrying it so bravely too.

"Why, Gurgles, is that you?" he said. "I scarcely knew you again. Last time you and I had a chat together, you said your back was almost broken, and you couldn't hold up any longer; and here you are careering along, playing with those heavy barges as if they were the little paper boats which the children used to sail upon you when you were a boy up yonder amongst the mountains. What's it all about? what does it all mean?"

"It means this, your Excellency. I know where I'm going now, and that makes the difference."

"Know where you're going, do you?" and the Sun laughed scornfully. "That's more than I do, then, and I've been a deal longer on the journey than you have. You're like all the rest of the young people now-a-days, you fancy yourself wiser than your elders. And, pray, may I ask where you are bound for?"

"Away over yonder," said Gurgles, pointing to the west. "The blue ocean is my home, and I'm going to it as fast as I can."

The Sun bent his bright eyes westward.

"Blue ocean! such rubbish!" he said. "I can't see anything of the sort, and I flatter myself my sight is as good as yours. Besides, our Queen's dominions only reach as far as that range of mountains beyond the pine forest, and there's nothing else beyond, even if you looked ever so long."

"Oh, yes, there's everything else beyond," said Gurgles. "And what should you say if I were to tell you that this Queen of ours doesn't really rule at all. She can only do what the King tells her to do. Everything belongs to him, and he lets the Queen sit on the throne here, but she has nothing to do with the blue ocean. He came to me the other day, and told me all about it."

"Oh! what a little goose you are," said the Sun. "I should be ashamed to call myself a river, and talk such nonsense. Why, the smallest baby in the Queen's dominions knows that there is nothing beyond them. Whatever can be ruled at all, she rules—and when she's done with you, you're done with altogether."

And the Sun shook his golden locks over his face, and marched proudly away. He didn't know, and he didn't want to know either, what lay beyond



that range of distant mountains. And he was vexed that Gurgles should have found out.

But Gurgles didn't care a bit. He never cried again after that, so that the Sun did not get a chance to turn his tears into mist, and hide the blue ocean. But one day when he looked, there *was* a mist, for all that.

"Some of my brother rivers have been crying," said Gurgles, "but I will not be afraid. I know now that the ocean is always there. And oh! how I wish they knew, too. Do they ever call upon the great King, and does he pity them as he pitied me?"

Gurgles did not know, and he could not go out of his place to ask. All he could do was to grow bigger and bigger, and do more and more work, and carry still heavier burdens; and at last what he longed for came to pass. For some of his own people, rivers who had not had so much time to grow, but only time to weep and wonder, came to him and said,—

"Let us go with you, for we see that you are brave, and patient, and cheerful. We will help you to bear these great burdens of yours, and then, per-

haps, you will teach us of your wisdom. We, too, have toiled, but we know not what the end will be."

And gladly Gurgles held out his arms and took them in, and told them all he knew; so that most joyfully they went on together, to the sea which was their home. And ever, as they drew nearer and nearer, Gurgles saw more and more of its wondrous beauty, and more clearly shone the light upon its silver-crested waves, and the pearly ships that rocked there were angels now, white-winged angels, ever brooding and floating upon the everlasting calm. Never a mist, never a cloud any more; but always that deep, clear stillness, with little touches of music stealing through it sometimes as nearer and nearer he journeyed.

Until one day, when all his work was done, he folded his hands upon his breast and looked westward to his home, and behold, from a great white throne, the face of his King looked down upon him, and a voice, sweeter than sweetest winds or waves, said,—

"It is enough. You may come now."

Then the Queen laid aside her spinning and arose full slowly from her place; and the great Sun, going

down, hid his face, ashamed, in a veil of crimson and purple ; and the King's angels, sweeping upwards with a great burst of song, said,—

“ It is finished, finished. Gurgles has come home to the great blue sea. He is at rest, and for ever, now.”



## CHAPTER IX.

## AUNT MARY'S SLICE.—GOING TO SCHOOL.

I THINK papa and mamma liked this story very much indeed. Papa kept nodding his head and smiling every now and then whilst Aunt Mary read. Mamma let her work drop, and sat with her hands clasped. Once or twice I am nearly sure I saw some tears in her eyes, but I really don't know why they should have come, for there was nothing to make any one cry. I thought it was a very pretty story, though at the same time there was a good deal in it that I could not quite make out. I believe Daisy thought the same, she looked so puzzled sometimes. How could the river, and the sun, and the rest of the things talk? As for Trot, after trying to listen for awhile, she gave it up, and leaning her head against my knee, went quietly to sleep. When Aunt Mary had finished, Daisy said,—

“ What a funny story ! ”

And Trot, rousing up, opened her brown eyes, and said, as seriously as could be,—

“ Ess, what a funny story ! ”

At which, of course, we all laughed very much.

Our bran pie was beginning to look as if some one had been meddling with it a good deal. Three slices were altogether gone, but still we managed to keep up its respectable appearance by turning the cut side away towards the window, and sticking in sprigs of holly to cover the empty places. And now Aunt Mary's turn had come. She was to do all the work to-night, cut the pie, and open the parcel, and read the story too.

I do believe that some one used to interfere with that pie, when we did not know anything about it. I am quite sure that when Aunt Mary and I laid the crust on, there was only one little white paper parcel under the slice, with her name upon it ; for I put the parcel in myself, and I know what there was in it too, a pocket-handkerchief which mamma had trimmed with lace-work. And yet, when she came to cut the pie on this fourth night, there were

two parcels. One very square, and neat, and tidy, with these words written upon it :—

“ For the good Auntie who reads the stories.”

When she opened it there was a little box, and inside the box the loveliest bracelet you ever saw, of delicate Indian silver-work, five lotus flowers, which looked as if they might have been made of hoar frost, they were so light and fairy-like. It must have come all the way from India too, for papa said people never had patience to do such work in this country. I wonder who put that box in? I never found out, but I think Aunt Mary was very pleased.

The story this time was delightful; we could all understand it quite well. It did not make me feel uncomfortable either, like that other tale about Dido.

### GOING TO SCHOOL.

In the same beautiful home with Rags and Dido lived a frisky, handsome young retriever, named Rouse. He did not live in the bosom of the family, like his two fashionable little cousins—a pretty commotion Rouse would have made in any lady's drawing-room, floundering about amongst lace curtains and

embroidered cushions, sweeping vases of flowers off the table with his big bushy tail, upsetting grand-mamma's work-basket for the fun of the thing, or rearing himself up on the chimney-piece to look at his black face in the mirror, as most likely he would have done. No, instead he lived at the farm-yard down below the garden, in a barrel with a canvas curtain over the front to keep the cold out; and once a day Stockman, the page, used to take him for a run in the big field.

Sometimes his mother, Nell, a middle-aged person of steady character and superior education, who lived in a proper kennel in the coachman's yard, used to be let out at the same time; but Rouse rather preferred going to play by himself, because then he could cut as many capers as he liked. And what capers they were, too! He would run after Jenny, the donkey, making her kick up her heels in a most ridiculous fashion. Or he would dash into the midst of eight little black pigs who were amusing themselves by playing with each other's tails. Or he would make a spring at the excellent old cow, as she licked up with her rough tongue the long grass by the hedge side. Or—for he could never be taught to

consider sheep in their serious character of future legs and shoulders of mutton—he would rush madly after grandmamma’s Lincolnshire half-breds, and send them helter-skelter into a corner, and then stand shaking his sides with laughter to see how frightened they looked. Oh! he was a merry tyke of a dog, as full of fun and mischief, Stockman used to say, as an egg is full of meat.

He was eight months old, as black as a coal, and as shiny as a barber’s apprentice; and had never done anything all his life but amuse himself. Now that sort of thing must come to an end, for Nevil, Gracie’s brother, a grown-up young man, said Rouse must begin to be trained. In other words, he must go to school, and Nevil himself was to be the master.

Rouse only had two books. One was a thick piece of stick, the other his master’s eye. Nevil took him into the big field and threw the stick as far as ever he could reach. Rouse was to run after it and fetch it back.

“All right,” said Rouse to himself, as he careered along over the firm smooth grass. “If this is going to school, I’ll go as long as ever you like, Mr. Nevil.” And he sprung on the stick with his big black paws,



and seized it in his teeth, and tossed it in the air, and worried it, and ran round and round it, until he was almost dizzy. Very fine fun indeed ! couldn't have been anything better.

"Bring that stick back!" cried Nevil, from the other end of the field.

"Oh, I daresay!" Rouse replied, giving it another toss. Stockman had thrown a stick for him sometimes, and then ordered him to bring it back, but he had never thought of such a thing as obeying, and why should he do so now? He could not understand why a stick should be a plaything one day, and a means of education the next. Nevil called two or three times, each time in a louder voice than before. Then he walked quietly into the middle of the field, took the stick and gave Rouse a ringing blow with it.

You must not think that Nevil was angry, or in a passion when he did this. It was not anger at all. He knew that the dog could only be taught to obey him in this way. If Rouse had been a real schoolboy, Nevil would have talked to him and tried to explain the thing to him; and only, perhaps, given him a box on the ear when he was

very wilful indeed. But being a dog made all the difference.

Rouse dropped his tail and hung his head, and looked very foolish. He knew well enough that he had been naughty. Nevil let him stand so for a little while. Then he threw the stick again and cried, "Go fetch!"

Off went Rouse, caught it, tossed it up in the air, played with it, set his teeth into it, gave it another toss.

"Bring that stick back, Rouse!"

But no; another toss, another gambol. Rouse was trying just how far he dare go with his master. Then Nevil began to walk towards him, and as soon as Rouse saw that, he remembered the beating, and brought the stick back like a good boy. Next time he brought it without ever stopping to play with it at all. And so ended the first lesson.

The second, next day, was very much like it, only that Rouse was to learn to drop the stick at his master's feet when he brought it. He was not like some stupid boys, who forget one day what they learned the day before. As soon as he saw his master with the stick, he began to jump and bound

and wag his tail in expectation of a grand game. He thought his education was quite finished, now that he had learned to fetch and carry. He did not know that was only the beginning. He must learn a great deal more before next September, when his master would want him to go out shooting over the moors.

The school-room was the field again. Nevil threw the stick. Rouse went after it, picked it up, brought it back, holding it as high as ever he could, and wagging his tail as if he had done something very wonderful.

"Dead," said Nevil, pointing first to the ground and then to the stick.

*Dead!* What could that mean? Rouse had never heard such a word before. He looked up wonderingly into his master's face. Nevil took the stick and laid it on the ground and said,—

"Dead."

Then he put it in Rouse's mouth, and again took it out and dropped it on the ground, and said "dead," but Rouse could not understand. He looked up so wistfully, as much as to say,—

"What *is* it you are talking about? I would do

right if I could, but I really don't know what you mean."

Nevil saw that Rouse was not stubborn, only perplexed. So he went to fetch Nell, who knew all about this sort of thing, having learned it at school, under the best masters, a long time ago. And then, after having tied Rouse to a tree, that he might not run too, he flung the stick away, and sent Nell after it. When she brought it back, she stood quite still for awhile; and then, when Nevil said "dead," dropped it quietly at his feet, Rouse looking on all the time, as seriously as could be.

After letting her do this several times, Nevil sent Nell back, and then tried again with Rouse. He could do it quite right now; he brought the stick back, held it a little while, and when he heard the word "dead," dropped it.

"Good dog! clever dog! good boy, Rouse. All right."

Rouse wagged his tail, held up his head and looked as important as the mayor of the smallest town in England.

That was the second lesson. Rouse had learned attention and obedience now, and those are two of

the most important lessons a dog can learn. Perhaps there is no need to say that they are just as important for little boys and girls.

It would take too long a time to tell you everything that Rouse learned day by day. He went to school every morning for an hour ; always, before he was taught a new lesson, practising carefully those he had taken before, to make sure he had not forgotten them. By-and-by he learned to "go find," which was very funny. Nevil used to walk quietly along, with the stick hidden under his coat. He would keep talking to Rouse all the time, patting him, snapping his fingers at him, and contrive to drop the stick without being seen. Then, when he had walked on for about fifty yards, he would suddenly stop, look about him as if he had lost something, and say to Rouse,—

"Go find!"

Rouse knew it was the stick, because his master had been carrying it when they started, and off he would start, not bounding or capering, though, but at a slow, steady trot, with his nose close to the ground ; dodging about from side to side, smelling, sniffing, and at last, when he spied the stick, making

a frantic rush at it and bringing it back in *such* triumph. Nevil would sometimes throw it in the lake, too, which was the finest treat of all, for Rouse enjoyed nothing so much as a good splash in the water. He would stand on the edge, quivering with eager anticipation as his master swung the stick round in the air before throwing it in, and then, with such a tremendous "flop," Rouse used to plunge in after it, and bring it out, and say as plainly as bright brown eyes could speak,—

"Now again, master, please."

That stick ~~was~~ Latin, Greek, mathematics, social science, political economy, indeed everything to Rouse; at once his prize and his punishment, the foundation of his success in life and the discipline wherewith his evil deeds, when he did any, were visited upon him.

But one day he had a sulky fit. It was when he had been at school nearly two months, so that he ought to have known better. Nevil called him one morning to have his lesson as usual, but this time he was to have it on the lawn in front of the dining-room window, so that grandmamma and Gracie might see what was going on. Rouse was having a

remarkably good time with a mutton-bone which Stockman had given him, and was not much disposed to attend school at all; but there was no help for it, he was obliged to come. Nevil was the commanding officer, and no insubordination was allowed in *his* company.

He went through his studies pretty well for a little while; but by-and-by, when Nevil threw the stick to the farther end of the lawn, and told him to fetch it, he flatly refused. He planted his fore-feet firmly down on the ground, and wouldn't stir an inch.

"Rouse, go fetch!"

No. Rouse would do nothing of the sort.

Nevil said "good boy," and patted him; pointed to the stick, and said again "go fetch," but still Rouse stood like the stump of a tree. No, he *wouldn't* go.

Nevil took a whip and gave him a knock with the thick end of it. Rouse didn't care for that either. He only dropped his tail and hung his head, and looked straight before him, as much as to say,—

"*I won't.*"

Then Nevil took hold of him by the collar to drag

him ; and as soon as ever Rouse found that out, he dropped on his haunches, and made his back like a piece of iron, and would not stir an inch on his own account. He let Nevil drag him along, bit by bit, as if he had been a lump of wood, across the lawn to where the stick lay. Even then he would not pick it up, and when Nevil forced his mouth open and laid the stick in it, he dropped it again directly.

Then his master hit him a very, very hard blow, a blow that would almost have been cruel if Rouse had not been such a naughty dog ; and after that he held the stick all right. He found that he had a will to contend with stronger than his own, and so he gave in. Boys who have been going to school a great deal longer than two months do the same thing sometimes ; stand out as long as ever they can, and only give in at last because they cannot help themselves. But always after his beating Rouse was as good as gold, and that is more than can be said of real people when they have come out of a sulky fit.

As part of his education was to pick up things and bring them to his master, he used sometimes to apply it rather curiously. He would take anything



that he found in the garden, a pair of shears, or a brush, or a hoe, or a glove, and bring it to Nevil; and one day he very much astonished a plump white duck by bringing her, too, all the way across the lawn to the harbour where Nevil was smoking his afternoon cigar. Poor Mrs. Duck was sitting so meekly upon her seven eggs, in a delightfully secluded corner of the garden, when Rouse nipped her up and bore her away, with her head and legs dangling down most uncomfortably. He did not hurt her at all, for retrievers are never allowed to bite *anything* which they carry; but still the situation was decidedly trying for the duck, and when the naughty fellow dropped her at his master's feet, she looked as indignant as an amiable person can possibly do.

One more story about Rouse, and he shall be done with. Sometimes, on summer evenings, Nevil and his sister went out for a walk, and took the dog with them. One Saturday evening they went a long way, across a common and up a hill, at the top of which was a little plantation with plenty of hedgehogs and weasels and rabbits in it. Rouse was allowed to go, carrying his stick as usual; but

this evening, finding that his master and Gracie were too busy talking with each other to take much notice of him, he dropped the stick and set off by himself into the plantation to have a weasel hunt.

It was fine fun. He had never done anything of that kind before, but it came quite naturally to him, as naturally as mischief does to little boys and girls. The poor weasels had an exciting time of it, but they always contrived to get away from him, and so did the rabbits, so there was no harm done. Rouse was in full chase after a big fat fellow when he heard his master's whistle, and came out of the plantation. And now, where was the stick?

"Go find!" said Nevil, thinking that most likely he had only just dropped it.

But for full half an hour Rouse had been frisking about in that plantation, and had no more idea than the man in the moon what had become of his stick.

"Naughty dog! go find!" said his master, when he came back without it, and Rouse began to feel very uncomfortable, for there is nothing more disgraceful to a retriever than to lose anything which has been given him to carry. It is as dishonourable

as lying or stealing for a real person. The poor fellow trotted round with his nose close to the ground, sniffing and smelling and whining, but no stick could be found; and then he came back and licked his master's boots, and pawed about upon him, as if he would say,—

“I can't find it. I'm very sorry. Do forgive me.”

But Nevil would not forgive him. He was really very vexed, because this showed that Rouse could not be completely trusted. And he made him go again and again, and yet again, to look for the stick, until the night grew dark and the dew began to fall, and he was afraid to keep his sister out any longer. Then he whistled the dog up, and they all set off home; but he would not let Rouse go bounding and capering along any more, as he had done when first they set out for their walk. He made him walk close behind him at his heels, and every few minutes he turned and said, in an angry voice,—

“Naughty dog! bad dog!”

Poor Rouse looked as guilty and dejected as could be. He felt he had committed the worst sin that a dog is capable of, he had been unfaithful to his

trust ; and now, perhaps, his master would never let him carry anything again. If dogs could cry, Rouse would have cried then, he felt so wretched. Gracie was quite sorry for him, and asked Nevil to say just one kind word to him, but Nevil would not. He must be taught to remember when he had done wrong.

At last Rouse could bear it no longer. He slipped quietly away, and presently came back, carrying a great stone between his teeth ; and after trotting patiently along with it for awhile, no one taking any notice of him, he looked up so wistfully in his master's face, and said, as well as he was able,—

“I have lost my stick, but you see I am carrying something else. Will not this do as well ? Will you not forgive me now ?”

Nevil could not resist that—who could, indeed ? He stooped down and gave the poor dog a pat, but even then Rouse did not begin to prance and caper again. He knew that he was forgiven, but still his conscience smote him, so that he felt he ought to do penance a little longer. Next morning he was more diligent than ever with his lessons, and then he brightened up and was all right again.

Rouse never went shooting with his master on the moors, though. Before September came he was dead. Nevil found him quite cold and stiff one morning; he had strangled himself by jumping up and catching his chain round the palings. A grave was made for him under one of the great fir-trees on the lawn, and a stone with his name upon it was put over him. Every one was very sorry, for Rouse, with all his faults, was a true-hearted, affectionate fellow; and, if he had only lived, would have been the best dog in the family. Perhaps he is happier somewhere else now.



## CHAPTER X.

## MAMMA'S SLICE.—THE BLUE ROSETTE.

THE next slice was mamma's. Under it she found a parcel containing a black silk apron. I had hemmed it, and Aunt Mary had trimmed it with very pretty braid-work. - There was a little pocket on each side, with braid-work round, and cord and tassels to tie it.

When mamma put it on, to let us see how pretty it looked, papa said he thought he ought to have something to do with it too, and he told her to come to him. Mamma came and dropped a curtsy in front of him, just as if she had been a little girl, and papa gave her four threepenny-pieces, two to put in each pocket, so that they might rattle. Then she made another curtsy, and went back to her seat. Aunt Mary and I, who knew papa was doing it for fun, laughed very much, but Daisy looked so surprised.

She seemed to think mamma was quite too big to have threepenny-pieces given to her to rattle.

Aunt Mary now began to read the story.

### THE BLUE ROSETTE.

Star and Beauty were two very aristocratic little calves who lived in the strictest seclusion on a splendidly managed farm. They never left their luxurious stable except on fine days, to take a short airing in the fold-yard, under the protection of Hodge, the foreman. They fed upon the best linseed-cake that could be bought for love or money; they ate the freshest, sweetest new-mown clover; they drank the purest water and the whitest milk; they had a fresh carpet of clean straw laid down for them every day of their lives. They had nothing in the world to do but eat, drink, sleep, and admire themselves in each other's large soft brown eyes. Society required nothing of them except that they should look elegant. They were possessed of all that calves could possibly desire, unless, perhaps, freedom might be considered a desirable thing; but then, as neither of them had ever known what freedom means, they could scarcely be pitied for not possessing that too.



"STAR AND BEAUTY."





On the same farm with these children of many mercies, lived two other little calves, Rough and Scrub by name. They did not belong to the upper or fold-yard classes at all, but cut capers on their own account from morning to night in the seven-acre paddock, a dry bit of field at the back of the stack-yard. Every day they grew scrubbier and more rough. Their bones stuck out, and their jackets were shamefully dirty, and their tails looked just like short bits of rope that had got untwisted at the ends, and they talked to each other without the least regard for grammar, and their accent was provincial, and their deportment dreadfully free and easy; and altogether they were a couple of the dirtiest, shabbiest, merriest, most ill-conditioned little vagabonds that ever lived upon short commons and unlimited neglect in this work-a-day world.

The only restraint they ever knew was at sundown, when Hodge came to drive them into their shed until next morning. They did not relish being driven into that shed at all, even though it afforded them a decent shelter from the rain and cold. Going to bed, especially in the summer time, was simply a nuisance. They would much rather have slept under

the hedge in the paddock, like true-born little vagabonds, or squeezed through a hole in the paling and covered themselves in the loose straw round the stack, so that they could have jumped up and had a fling whenever they liked, during the night. But then, there were those tiresome laws against vagrancy—why in the world couldn't the farmer let his stock sleep where they liked?—and the bailiff coming round with his long stick, and his fine talk about decency and respectability. “Bother decency and respectability!” said the plebeian little calves; “let them give us a good feed of clover first, like those two stuck-up youngsters over yonder in the fold-yard, and then talk to us about what we owe to decency and respectability.” But still they had to go into the shed, after all.

On their way they used to pass the commodious residence in which Star and Beauty lived. The top half of the door was generally open, so that they could peep in at the young aristocrats, and sometimes they would thrust their noses over and snuff up with envious relish the delicious smell of linseed-cake and new-mown clover which was wafted out from the mangers of nobility.

That delicious smell always put Rough and Scrub into a bad temper. *They* never got any linseed-cake, not they. And as for clover, new-mown clover, with its fragrant clusters of crimson blossoms, they did not even see such a luxury from one month's end to another, unless a waggon-load of it happened to go by on the other side of the hedge. And what, they should like to know, was the use of seeing it go by on the other side of the hedge? The owner of the farm was shamefully unfair—that was what the owner of the farm was. No wonder their coats were ragged, and their tails like ends of untwisted rope, and their legs not worth mentioning for shape or comeliness, when there was such favouritism in high quarters. What did the owner of the farm mean, they should like to know, by keeping some of his calves in a splendid establishment, and feeding them on the fat of the land, whilst others were turned out to the short dry grass of that miserable little seven-acre paddock, where a few stray heads of clover were as hard to find as plums in a workhouse pudding, or raisins in boarding-school cake? What had Star and Beauty done that they should live in luxury, with new carpets to kick about upon every day of

their lives; and what had they, Rough and Scrub, left undone, that they should be driven to that hole of a hovel night after night, with never a wisp of clean straw to lie down upon, or a taste of anything to make them feel comfortable?

And the two vagabond calves used to give their heads a toss, and their tails an indignant switch as they trundled off, in front of Hodge, to their "casual ward" in the cowshed.

But if Star and Beauty had the best of it at night, Rough and Scrub got their turn sometimes in the morning, when the sun was shining and the dew-drops winking on the grass, and they frisked past the half-open mansion-house door to the seven-acre paddock, where, after scratching up a scanty breakfast, and taking a drink from the pond, they would have nothing to do all day but stretch themselves in the sun, or toss and tumble and caper on the rough grass; and rest, when they were tired, under the cool shade of the elm-trees down at the bottom of the field.

"Come, come," they would say to each other, as they peeped over the mansion-house door, and saw Star and Beauty lying with a whole mangerful of

crimson clover before them, and never a bit of sunshine or fresh air to help it down, "come, come; things are not so bad with us, after all. Fine clothes and pretty figures and delicate complexions are all very well in their way, but they're an awful plague when you have to stay in the house all day long to take care of them. We'd rather have dry grass, Miss Beauty, and a drink of plain water, and a good romp after it, than eat any quantity of ripe, red, juicy clover, and then have nothing to do but stare at each other until we're hungry again."

And down went the scraggy little heads, and up went the twisty little bits of tails, and away went the saucy little rascals to the seven-acre paddock and the short grass, and the fun and the freedom and the frolic, leaving Star and Beauty in meek-eyed indolence amongst their straw.

Poor little elegant calves! It was not their fault that they were so good-looking as to be worth taking care of and introducing to society at the Fenborough Agricultural Show. They had had nothing to do with it. And they had never done any harm to any one, that they knew of. Why, then, should they be subjected to the insolence of the lower classes? Why

could they not be allowed to compliment each other in peace and quietness? So they just turned their lovely heads away, and gently rubbed one another's noses, and they wondered whatever those rough, rude calves meant by making faces and jeering at them every time they passed the mansion-house door. Such dirty creatures too, and with such ragged coats, and bones sticking out all over them. It was quite shocking that there should be that class of people in the world at all. If calves of the lower orders could not keep themselves clean, and speak good grammar, and refrain from flinging themselves about in that disgusting manner, why did they not go out of sight, or retire to some obscure corner of the farm where respectable families would not be annoyed by them? Really this sort of thing was becoming insufferable. It must be put a stop to. The owner of the farm, or Hodge, or some person in authority must be spoken to, and means taken to secure the privacy of the mansion-house.

So said Beauty, putting out her tongue and languidly licking up a head of clover which happened to be within reach. She did not care very much for it; she was beginning to be rather tired of these early

spring vegetables. And she wondered what it would feel like to be out in the open air without an attendant to walk behind her. Perhaps it would be rather nice. She did not know.

But she did find out before very long, and so did Star, how it felt to be in the sunshine; for next day the owner of the farm came to the mansion-house door, and after looking at them, and feeling them all over, and stroking them down, told them that, as their education was now completed, and their manners formed upon the best models, and their beauty cultivated to its utmost possible extent, the time had arrived when they should be introduced to society, in order to assume that position and obtain that settlement to which their rank entitled them.

Accordingly one of the great harvest waggons was brought to the door, fresh straw was laid at the bottom, and after much patting, petting, and praising, Star and Beauty were lifted in and conveyed at a gentle trot down the Fenborough Road.

It was very pleasant. The air was delightfully refreshing, and the sun very warm, though at first the light dazzled their eyes because they were not



accustomed to it. But they could not skip about, even if they had wished it ever so, as they were packed in with trusses of straw to keep them from knocking against each other; and the netting which was stretched over them for a protection from the flies, prevented them also from tossing their heads in anything like a frisky fashion. However, that was a trifling inconvenience. They were having a carriage-drive, and they were going to be introduced to society; and under such circumstances people of breeding do not care to frisk about like vulgar folk at a village frolic.

As the waggon passed the seven-acre paddock, Rough and Scrub scampered up to the hedge to see what all the noise was about. They soon caught sight of their genteel relations, languidly swaying backwards and forwards amongst the trusses of straw. Star and Beauty looked the other way, they were afraid of having rude remarks addressed to them; but Rough and Scrub had no intention of being put off in that way.

"Going out for a ride, eh?" said Rough, who generally began the fun when these two naughty fellows wanted to annoy their superiors. "Going

out for a ride, and in such a pretty carriage, too. My word, how grand we are ! Isn't it nice ?”

And Rough set his feet together, and began to jog backwards and forwards, just as Star and Beauty were obliged to jog, on account of the motion of the waggon.

“ Don't take any notice,” whispered Beauty, turning her great brown eyes serenely away to a meadow ever so far off. “ Mamma said we were never to take any notice when rude people spoke to us. And, besides, Hodge is here ; we are quite 'safe.’”

“ Are you comfortable in that 'ere carriage ?” said Scrub ; “ wouldn't you like to have a bit of a fling now, only you can't ? Just look here.”

And Scrub gave a splendid caper on the grass as he said so, to let the genteel calves see what a nice thing a bit of a fling was, when people *could* get it.

Star looked out of the corner of one eye, as far as he could see without quite turning round. Yes, a fling would certainly have been very delightful, on that soft springy grass too, only it might spoil his lovely satin overcoat, and that would not do at all. But never mind, rank had its little disadvantages sometimes. They could not be helped. They must

not be mourned over. . And on the waggon jogged, Rough and Scrub staring after it, and making rude remarks as long as it was in sight.

Where could those two young people be going, with straw cushions, too, and a netting to keep the flies away, and a servant to take care of them? Something must be going to happen. Favouritism again, most likely; some sort of 'a fresh treat for my lord and my lady, as if their life already, from morning to night, was not just one long, uninterrupted treat. Why, fresh air and sunshine were the only things in the world they could possibly have wished for, and now they were having these too. What injustice! Rough and Scrub must find out all about it. So off they set across the field, to a respectable, middle-aged cow who was standing with her feet in the pond, and asked her if she could give them any light on the subject.

Mrs. Brindle—that was the cow's name—could tell them everything. There was to be an agricultural show at Fenborough next day, and Star and Beauty had been entered for prizes. If they gained the first prize, they would have blue rosettes fastened upon their foreheads, and most likely, when they

were brought home, there would be flags upon the waggon, and perhaps a band of music and a great deal of cheering. Mrs. Brindle knew all about that sort of thing, for she had been considered—she mentioned this with a slight blush—something of a beauty in her day, and had taken the first prize at the Royal Agricultural Show, when she was introduced. And if it had not been for the delicate state of her nervous system at the present time, and the important duties which were expected from her upon the farm, she could quite have enjoyed a trip to Fenborough herself, though, of course, at her time of life, she left prizes and such things to younger people.

And Mrs. Brindle gave her tail a complacent swing, and turned gently away, as if to intimate that she had no further remarks to make.

Oh! that was it, then. And Rough and Scrub put their heads together as they walked slowly back to the shelter of the elm-trees, to talk over what they had heard. So by-and-by Star and Beauty would come home with blue rosettes on their foreheads, and then the idle creatures would be more insolent than ever. And bands of music and

cheering — such nonsense, such ridiculous nonsense!

And yet it must be rather pleasant to have such attentions paid to one. Fancy themselves now, supposing they were a little bit handsomer, riding gracefully home in the waggon, with crowds of people looking at them, and praising them, and making a fuss over them. Very nice, very nice indeed! And, pray, why had not such happiness fallen to their lot, they should like to know? Why had they not been allowed to have large brown eyes and delicate complexions and lovely salmon-coloured noses, with drops of crystalline dew upon them? And why had they not been fed with linseed-cake and new-mown clover, until their bones had gone out of sight, and their skins become soft and smooth as satin? Something was wrong, or one would not be put up and another put down in that shameful manner. But they would rebel, that they would; they would strike; they would emigrate; they would do something to show the farmer that they were not going to be beaten down and trodden under foot any longer, whilst people who had no more right to it than themselves were sent to shows, and bedizened with

blue rosettes, and brought home with music and cheering, like royalty itself.

And just to feel how strong he was, and how much he could do if he tried, Scrub gave his hind legs a vigorous fling, and happened to hit Rough on the head. He did not mean to hurt him, he was only trying experiments with his hind legs, but Rough was vexed all the same, and thought Scrub intended to insult him; and so he hit back in return. You see they had been talking about their wrongs until they had talked themselves into a bad temper, and neither of them was disposed to take an injury quietly, even though it might have been an unintentional one.

Of course Scrub hit back then, and a great deal harder, because he really *had* begun to mean it; and there was presently a regular stand-up fight between them. They butted each other with the little bits of horns which were beginning to grow upon their foreheads, and they kicked, and strove, and struggled, and at last got so furious, that one of the farming men, who was going through the field, came up with his hoe and gave them a good beating, and shut them up in separate sheds until next morning.

Here Aunt Mary stopped. The story was only half done, she said, but we should find the rest of it under papa's slice. So we children went off to bed, wondering very much what would be the end of these four queer little people.

Next night being Sunday, the pie was not opened at all. Instead, Aunt Mary played for us, and we sang many pretty little hymns for children. Then mamma read us a story from the Bible—it was the story of Joseph this time—and when the reading was over, we had to answer questions about it. For each question that we answered correctly, mamma gave us a little white counter. Daisy got the most counters. She had a very good memory, and always used to listen attentively.

Last of all, papa took Trot on his knee, and Daisy and I sat on each side of him, and he told us about things that happened when he was a little boy. That was what he always used to do on Sunday evenings. Of course I had heard it over and over and over again ; but it was always as wonderful and delightful as ever. I felt so disappointed if any one happened to come to see us on Sunday evenings, so that papa could not tell us his little-boy stories ;

because other nights he was tired, and mamma would not let us trouble him.

On Monday evening he opened his slice of the pie. In the parcel underneath he found a smoking-cap of black velvet, embroidered with gold braid, and with a long tassel on one side. That was what Aunt Mary had been making when she wanted me to go into the town for her, you remember.

We made him put it on, as mamma had put her apron on, and very nice he looked ; for his hair had not begun to be so grey then, and it curled so prettily under the edge of the cap. He said he thought, as we had made him put it on, we ought to give him a cigar ; for what was the use of a smoking-cap if you hadn't anything to smoke ?

Mamma said all right, there was a nice cosy fire in the breakfast-room, and he could go there and have his cigar as comfortably as could be, all by himself, whilst Aunt Mary read the story to us in the drawing-room.

But papa said "No." Mamma knew well enough of course he would. And then Aunt Mary began the second part of the story. How anxious I had been for two whole days to hear what became of those calves !



## CHAPTER XI.

PAPA'S SLICE.—THE BLUE ROSETTE (*continued*).

MEANWHILE, Star and Beauty were jogging along to the Fenborough Agricultural Show.

There were numbers of people waiting to see them get out when their carriage arrived at the show-yard, and numbers more walking about inside, chiefly gentlemen with catalogues in their hands. Some of these gathered about our two little friends, and pulled at them, and felt them all over, and measured their backs, and their chests, and their foreheads—"If this is society," thought Beauty to herself, "it is not so very nice after all"—and pinched them and squeezed their ears, and at last fastened a great blue rosette, with long ends to it, upon each of their foreheads, after which they were taken to a pen and left to themselves for a little while.

Star and Beauty did not know what the rosettes

meant at all. They only knew that the long ends were very troublesome, because they dangled about so, and got into their eyes, and tickled their ears. They tried to scratch them off with their hind feet, but they could not reach so far; and then they tried to rub them off against the railing, but they were too fast on for that, so they were obliged to let them alone. Star was complaining of being plagued so with the ceremonies of society, when a handsome young bullock, who was standing not far away, came to the front of his pen, and after apologizing for the liberty of addressing them without an introduction, said that, instead of being annoyed, they ought to be exceedingly proud of the ornaments upon their foreheads; because the blue rosette meant a first prize, and it had been given to them on account of their beauty. He had a rosette himself, as they might observe if they looked at the side of his head,—here Mr. Bullock turned to give them a prospect of it,—but it was only an orange one, which came second in value. However, it was better than none; and most likely he should be in the first class next year if the gentleman with whom he lived behaved well enough to him.

Of course Star and Beauty were quite content then. They did not try to rub their rosettes any more; but after thanking Mr. Bullock for his polite attentions, and saying that they hoped for further acquaintance, they lay down to rest until next morning, when the fine ladies and gentlemen would come to look at them.

It was not quite so comfortable as being at home in their country mansion, for they had not straw enough to lie upon, and the wind blew rather cold into their pen. However, they managed to get through the night, and in the morning Hodge, who was still in attendance, served them an elegant breakfast of linseed-cake and clover, and Mr. Bullock, who seemed quite inclined to be on friendly terms, came forward and complimented them upon their appearance, so that the time passed very agreeably until ten o'clock, when the company were to arrive. Of course, after that, there was no time for chit-chat. Star and Beauty adjusted their rosettes, and smoothed their faces, and switched away with their tails a few straws which were sticking to their dresses, and then, placing themselves in an elegant position, waited for admiration, with the well-bred

ease and indifference of people who know that they are sure to get it.

They did get it, too. Every one who came past the pen had something flattering to say to them, which of course was very gratifying; because calves, like other members of society, like to feel themselves appreciated, especially when they have taken so much trouble to give people the opportunity of seeing them. At first, when the compliments were paid, Beauty used to smile and bow very prettily in return, and arch her plump neck, and drop her round eyelids, and then glance shyly round to see if Mr. Bullock was looking; but by-and-by, when she became more accustomed to that sort of thing, she took it as her right. She was beautiful, and people *ought* to take notice of her, and there was no need for her to be so very grateful. It was quite enough that she looked pretty, without taking the trouble to thank those who told her so.

Ah! she and Star knew, now, why they had been taken such care of, and fed upon the best linseed-cake, and kept in that comfortable mansion-house, instead of being allowed to run about in public like those rude boys, Rough and Scrub. And they

determined that when they got back to the Grange farm they would never even look at such vulgar people again ; they would ask to have the upper half of their door securely fastened, so that the two ill-bred calves should not be able to stare in upon them in passing. Of course that would keep out a great deal of fresh air, and all the sun, but if these privileges could only be bought at the risk of insult, why they must be relinquished. Position was better than fresh air, any day.

So the first day of the show passed, and in the evening they had a little chat with Mr. Bullock, and went to sleep. Next day it was not nearly so pleasant, because the cheap trip people came, and wanted to be so familiar. That really was the worst of common people, they never knew how to keep their distance—such incessant patting, and punching, and pinching became quite a nuisance. And the show was kept open so late too, and the gas-light was so trying, and the clover so very flabby, and every day it got worse. Oh, dear, dear ! how tedious this first season in town did begin to be. How they did long to get back to their country house. They could almost have wished that they had not belonged

to the upper classes at all ; nay, they could almost have changed places with Rough and Scrub, and taken their shaggy coats and thick tails and bony little bits of legs, if with these they could have had a few hours' peace and quietness, away from that perpetual glare and crowd and confusion.

To make matters worse, too, they found that their loveliness was beginning to fade in the hot foul atmosphere of the show. The dew began to dry up from their salmon-coloured noses ; their eyes grew dim and red, their ears limp and flabby. They were so fearfully tired that they had to put themselves into all sorts of awkward positions to keep from quite falling down. Beauty would have smiled gratefully enough now for one single compliment, even from the roughest of the cheap trip people, but none was offered. Instead, the ladies and gentlemen who came past the pen made fun of her. One fat, red-faced man looked at the blue rosette, all dingy and faded now, which dangled from her forehead, and said to a smart young woman beside him,—

“ The idea of that creature taking the first prize. It's ridiculous ! ”

“ Perfectly,” said the lady. “ Poor little ob-

ject! I wonder if she knows what a figure she looks."

You may be sure there was no more pleasure for Beauty after that. Even young Mr. Bullock withdrew his polite attentions, and bestowed them upon two milk-white calves who, in all the freshness of youthful beauty, had been placed in a pen on the other side of him. He did not even shake hands with poor Beauty when, on the fifth day of the show, Hodge came to say that the carriage was waiting. No, he was talking and laughing as merrily as possible with the two Misses Milkwhite, and only gave his tail an indifferent swing as his former favourites turned for a farewell look. He was making fun of Beauty's withered face, if she had only known it.

So the poor things were lifted into the waggon, and flags were put up, and there was a band of music, and Hodge had a rose in his button-hole, and all the people on the farm were assembled to see the procession come home. But what did Star and Beauty care for that? They only wanted to be at rest, away from the glare and noise, and, worse still, the hollowness of society. Wearily enough they dropped upon

their straw beds that night, and they hoped the farmer would never, never, never send them to another agricultural show, even though they won the blue rosette fifty times over.

You will perhaps like to know now what became of Rough and Scrub.

After having seen the other little calves go to the show, they began to be very naughty indeed. Rough was the worst. He grew more and more jealous, and envious, and discontented. He was vexed with himself for not being handsome, and vexed with the farmer for not feeding him upon linseed-cake, and vexed with Hodge for not speaking to him respectfully enough, and vexed with Scrub for not letting him always eat in the best part of the field and sleep on the driest side of the shed. In a word, he disliked himself, and his neighbours, and the farm, and the government, and everything.

So one day he determined to emigrate. At any rate, he could not be worse off, go where he would. The Duke of Dykeland's place was a little farther up the country, he would go there and start afresh.

But he did not say anything to Scrub about it, because he liked the idea of being, as he called it,



on his own hook. Accordingly he set to work quietly one night, just as it was beginning to be dark, and no one could see him. There was a thin place in the hedge of the seven-acre paddock, on the side next the road. He poked and poked until he had made this thin place quite a hole, and then he pushed and pushed until he had got through to the other side, clear away from everybody.

He thought, when once he got to the other side, he should have been in a fair track for Dykelands; but instead he found himself at the bottom of a dirty ditch, in a fair track for nothing but being choked with mud and slime. After plunging for half an hour, he scrambled out of it, rubbed himself clean on the grass, and felt himself all over, to be sure that no bones were broken. Then he set forwards to the model farm of Dykelands, about two miles away. That was a fine farm, with plenty of good green grass and blossoming clover, and he thought if he could get taken on there he might manage to have a tolerably comfortable time of it; and even, after a few months of generous diet, grow handsome enough to be introduced into society at an agricultural show.

But two miles is a long way, and Rough got very tired, and he thought he would lie down to sleep under the hedge. When he awoke, it was quite dark. However, he knew the way to the farm, so he took a mouthful of grass—it was very dry grass, not even so good as that in the seven-acre paddock—and trudged on.

Presently he heard a fearful noise. It was the Duke's carriage and four, careering along at a tremendous pace, bringing His Grace home from a meeting of Liberal electors. Rough was tired, confused, faint, and half asleep. Instead of getting out of the way, he stumbled into the middle of the road. Almost before he knew where he was, the horses' feet were upon him, the Duke's carriage rolled over him, and he had but just strength to drag himself to a heap of stones, where Hodge found him in the morning, stiff and quite dead.

So much for the emigration scheme. Now about Scrub.

He felt very lonely without his companion ; for, in spite of their frequent quarrels, they had a sincere attachment for each other. Perhaps he might have been inclined to emigrate too, but he happened to

overhear Hodge and the farmer discussing the untimely fate of poor Rough, and wisely resolved to stay at home. Still, he felt that there was something out of joint somewhere. The thought crossed his mind that perhaps, after all, he might be out of joint himself, as well as the "things." So he went and opened his feelings to Mrs. Brindle, who was sitting by the pond, looking as peaceful as though there were no such plagues in the world as unjust farmers, bloated aristocrats, and neglected calves.

It was the best thing he could have done. Mrs. Brindle, though not a person of advanced views, had a great deal of common sense. She had gone through life with her eyes open, and in her quiet way knew as much as most people. She listened patiently to Scrub's statement of his wrongs, heard him express his opinions about his board and lodgings, and his aspirations after linseed-cake and well-shaped legs; looked as grave as possible when he told her how he wanted to be fat, handsome, and happy, to live in a mansion-house like Beauty, and to have proper attention paid to him. Then she opened her mouth and spake.

She told him he was a downright stupid, foolish

calf, and that he had much better make the best of himself in the station to which he was born, than worry the flesh off his bones and spoil what little beauty he did possess, by envying those who appeared to be more prosperous. She said it was all very well to be good-looking, she had been a beauty herself once—here Mrs. Brindle glanced at the reflection of herself in the pond, and drew herself up with matronly dignity—but good looks had their disadvantages. If he wanted the silky tail, and the pink nose, and the new-mown clover, and the linseed cake, he must make up his mind to take the shut-up stable along with them; and if he liked freedom and fresh air, he must not object to the short commons which generally accompany such privileges.

Also, for her own part, she should advise him, instead of tossing his head next time he passed Beauty's door, to take off his cap politely and ask to be allowed the favour of a little private conversation with her ladyship. He would perhaps find out then that even rank and loveliness have their drawbacks; and learn how much wiser it is for calves to be content where they are, than envy people who may be really no better off than themselves.

Scrub took Mrs. Brindle at her word. Next time he passed the mansion-house door, he stopped and asked if Beauty would be good enough to spare him five minutes, as he had matters of importance to mention to her. Beauty came forward very graciously. Indeed, ever since that Fenborough show, her manners towards the humbler inhabitants of the farm had been much sweeter, for she had learned that if the lower classes are sometimes rough and rude, the higher ones can be in their turn hollow and forgetful, which is just as bad. She began to find, too, that the world was not made entirely for her own convenience, and that one can let in other good things besides air and sunshine by having the stable-door half open sometimes.

So the two calves had a serious talk, at the end of which Star and Beauty said they should be delighted to see Scrub if at any time he would stop to take a head of clover with them; and he on his part promised that if the farmer ever so far relaxed his rules as to allow them to visit the seven-acre paddock, he would be proud to show them the pond, and the elm-trees, and other objects of interest in the neighbourhood.

From that day Scrub turned over a new leaf. He tried to keep himself clean. He ate his food with thankfulness, so that, though there was not much of it, it did him a great deal more good. He began to behave respectfully to every one, and used his best endeavours to do his duty in that station of life to which the farmer had appointed him.

In consequence of this change in his habits, Scrub actually began to look like a respectable member of society. His coat improved, so did the shape of his legs; he began to cultivate his mind too, and gradually rose from one station to another, until he became quite a middle-class bullock, and mixed with the best society on the farm. True, he was never sent to a show, and never obtained a blue rosette for his beauty; but every one valued him for his honest worth, and in course of time the Duke of Dykelands, who happened to be riding over the Grange farm, was so impressed with Scrub's sterling qualities, that he asked permission to remove him to his own estate, to take charge of a herd of young people who had just come down from Scotland. There, for the rest of his life, our good friend lived, respected by all who knew him, and proving in his own useful,

honourable career, that every rank may be made noble by the faithfulness with which its duties are discharged.

Beauty was sold soon after the show; and Star, with a bit of holly stuck in the middle of his forehead, formed the leading object in a Fenborough butcher's display of Christmas beef.

## CHAPTER XII.

## CONCLUSION.

PAPA was very much amused with this story. He said it was the best we had had yet, and he was very glad Aunt Mary had kept part of it for his share of the pie. I believe he saw more fun in it than we did, for sometimes he would break out into such a hearty laugh, when Daisy and I did not think there was anything particular to laugh about. Daisy remembered it quite well, though. That night she told nearly every bit of the story over again to nurse, as we were having our hair curled. But, indeed, Daisy could remember all the stories, except that one about Gurgles. I used to hear her repeating them to Trot almost word for word.

So now the pie was finished, the beautiful, beautiful pie, and we kissed Aunt Mary all round, and said she was the dearest, kindest, cleverest aunt in



the world. What a pie it had been, to be sure ! Was there ever a pie before which lasted so long, and gave both little girls and grown-up people so much enjoyment ? But, indeed, did I say it was finished ? Was nothing left of it but the dish, and the bran, and the sprigs of holly ? Was not everything left of it, except the crust which Daisy and Trot and I had eaten night by night, as the respective portions were opened ? Had we not still our presents, Daisy and Trot their pretty little girl-dolls, who were always carefully undressed in the nursery and brought down in their white gowns and caps to say good night to every one before they went to bed : and had not I my toy-piano, and Aunt Mary her Indian bracelet, and mamma her apron with four threepenny-pieces in the pockets, and papa his smoking-cap ?

And then the stories, those dear delightful stories, were they finished ? Did we not say them over and over, and over again, long after the pie-dish and the bran and the holly had disappeared ? Many a time, when we were having tea with Aunt Mary in her little room, or when we were doing our sewing in the summer arbour, we used to creep close up to her and whisper,—

"Auntie, do tell us one of the bran-pie stories."

And whichever of them she happened to remember seemed the best and prettiest of all. Finished, indeed! I think the pie was anything but finished.

Years and years afterwards, when Aunt Mary was married, and I was staying with her in London, we were looking over her big old writing-desk, and I found these pie-stories rolled up, just as they were at first, tied with the pink, and blue, and crimson, and white ribbons; and I wondered if little girls would be pleased yet with the same things which used to please me in my time; because, if so, it was a pity the stories should be kept shut up there always. So I asked Aunt Mary if she would let me make them into a book, and she said I might, if only I would promise to write the history of the bran pie myself, and tell everything exactly as it really happened.

I had almost forgotten some of the things, but we talked them over together, and Aunt Mary remembered one little bit, and I remembered ano-

ther, and so, little by little, we got them all put together, like the pieces of a dissected puzzle, making a complete story, just as I have written it out for you here. I hope that some little girls who read this book may have an Aunt Mary, or an aunt somebody else, who will help them to make a bran pie, full of pretty stories and presents. Of course there need not be toy-pianos in it, nor Indian bracelets, nor fine smoking-caps. Sweetmeat purses for the children, or a pincushion, or a book-mark, such as any little girl can make for her mother, will do very well, or a neatly hemmed handkerchief, or a kettle-holder, or a knitted mat, just to show that loving little fingers have been at work for some one. Then the crust is very easy to make, and every one can get bran to put in the dish, and sprigs of holly to stick round it, and comfits to mark each person's name on the slices.

Now try if you can't, some of you, have a bran pie this Christmas; and if you can, you might write and tell me all about it. I shall be ever so glad to hear. For nothing pleases me more than to know that the little girls whom I love so much are

able to make simple amusements for themselves, amusements sweet at the time, and sweet to remember, too, when they have dropped far, far down into the clear shining pools of memory.

And now good-bye to you all.



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